

THE
FALSE FRIEND:

A DOMESTIC STORY.

VOL. I.

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A DOMESTIC STORY.

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IN FOUR VOLUMES.

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THE FRIEND

A DOMESTIC STORY



IN THE HISTORY OF MAN

VOL. I

THE DOMESTIC STORY

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THE
FALSE FRIEND.

LETTER I.

*Lady DENMORE to the Duchess of
ALDBOROUGH.*

Denmore Castle, June 6, 1796.

I HAVE expected your arrival, dearest of mothers, till my solicitude has wearied me into impatience. You have, by more than three weeks, exceeded the usual period of your annual visit; and your delay, added to the state of health in which I left you, cannot fail to render me more than uneasy.

You will find the castle strangely, though pleasingly altered. The gloom

which has long thrown a melancholy hue over every object, particularly that which is of most importance, has at length subsided; in a few words, Lord Denmore has regained that composure of mind, the loss of which so deeply afflicted every individual of the family. I have yielded to his commands, respecting the daughter of Major St. Leger, and she will, in a few days, become the inmate of our mansion.

You have often heard Lord Denmore speak of the orphan Gertrude; report has been her herald; and to her share it has given all the graces that can make youth lovely, and all the virtues that may charm even in the chilling winter of declining age. She comes to embellish society; to repay, by the exercise of her talents, the long debt of gratitude, which from her infancy she has owed to Lord Denmore. Her father was his friend. Her mother, widowed at
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an early age, became the object of his pity. He protected her, he soothed her with the zealous assiduity of sympathy, but his efforts to restore her tranquillity of mind proved ineffectual, for after a conflict of many tedious weeks, she drooped—and perished.

The next claimant on his warmly philanthropic feelings was the infant Gertrude. Left unprotected, though too young to know the magnitude of her loss, and thrown on a wide world of sorrow, where her defenceless sex is exposed to every peril, every humiliation, she found an asylum in the bosom which loved her gallant father, and which throbbed to bestow the bond of attachment on this ill-fated orphan.

My Lord was then a minor, and preparing for his continental travels. The infant was committed to the care of an old and faithful female servant of the

family, with strict commands to omit nothing which might prove beneficial to its health, or pleasing to its fancy.

At three years of age, Lord Denmore still on the Continent, the pretty Gertrude was placed at a boarding-school near Dublin: where, under the guardian eye of a good and enlightened woman, she gave an earnest of those virtues, which have at length evinced themselves, by all the characteristics of mental splendour.

Since the infancy of Gertrude, Lord Denmore has twice visited Ireland, merely for the purpose of inspecting the progress of her education. She would at an early age have been removed to a situation more convenient for her guardian's frequent visits, but the amiable woman to whose care she was consigned, conjured my Lord not to change her asylum; and no circumstance, but the
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the recent death of her protectress, could have established her residence at Denmore Castle.

When last Lord Denmore saw her, she was twelve years old; extremely beautiful, and very like her mother. From that period all his former assurances of friendship have been reiterated and confirmed; for, having sworn to bestow on her the protection of a father, she now comes to prove that worth which sanctions the distinction, and to claim his promise.

The agitation of mind under which my Lord has laboured, as that period advanced which was to complete the task of friendship, cannot be described. Every hour seemed to linger on, painfully tedious; and every moment to augment the load of hopes and fears which pressed heavily on his bosom. Expecting to trace in the features of the youthful Gertrude, the softened re-

semblance of her father, and to behold in the tear of gratitude, flowing from the full heart, the tenderness and virtue of her gentle mother, how could a bosom like Lord Denmore's, a bosom replete with sensibility, feel tranquil?

Gertrude will be at the Castle in a few days; and I trust, I hope that your presence will augment the joy of her arrival. If not to greet the lovely stranger, for my sake do not delay to visit us: I shall want a companion; for it is but natural that, at least for a time, the *protégée* of Lord Denmore will engross all his attention.— Best of mothers, adieu.

LETTER II.

GERTRUDE ST. LEGER *to* FRANCES
MONTGOMERY.

Denmore Castle, June 15, 1796.

I SHOULD have written to you on my arrival at the Castle, but the fatigue of a long journey and the terrors of a boisterous voyage, rendered me incapable of every exertion. Time has renovated my strength, and with it the memory of your claims on my attention.

Frances, this new asylum, in which destiny has placed me, is a terrestrial paradise ! Here I cannot but be happy. Lady Denmore is a lovely woman ; she has been educated in the great world, or, to speak more rationally, in the world of fashionable splendour. On

the morning of my arrival she completed her twenty-fourth year. The Castle was the abode of joy and festivity; I never before witnessed such a scene: every heart seemed to throb with rapture; every eye to beam with mirth and affection; except the dark and penetrating eyes of Lord Denmore.

He received me with an embarrassed mien, which for a moment amazed and pained me. He approached the carriage with, what I thought, a reluctant step. On beholding me he started. I was grieved to know that the first impression which I made on his mind, was an unpleasing one; and shrunk, while his countenance evinced more of haughty reserve, than of indulgent friendship. I had, during five years, the interval since last I saw him, been honoured with many kind and soothing letters; but the portrait which my fancy drew from the language they conveyed, bore
not

not the smallest resemblance to the protector whom I now contemplated. My chagrin was infinite ; my disappointment humiliating ; my bosom palpitated ; my cheek displayed the sudden suffusion of wounded pride ; and a tear of vexation stole from my downcast eye, in spite of every effort which my heart made to repel it.

From a being to whom I owed no gratitude, from whom I had experienced no more than common kindness, I should have expected such a reception ; but I had taught myself to believe that Lord Denmore was liberal and humane ; and I felt, too sensibly I felt, that my obligations were countless.

Never, till I experienced this agonizing moment, did I know the misery of an orphan's destiny. All the tenderness of parental care seemed to recede from my awakened fancy, and I, who had anticipated a thousand consolations,

looked round in vain for an eye to pity, or a bosom to protect me.

From the bounty of Lord Denmore I have been supported; by his generosity educated with a profusion of expence, which warmed my heart with gratitude and affection. An entire stranger to the world, I hastened to his breast, there to find a father's fondness: to experience that glow of friendship, once merited and valued by the author of my being. I found an icy arm that chilled me:—I shrunk—and shivered.

Lord Denmore coldly bade me welcome as I descended from the carriage; but his hand trembled, and his averted eyes seemed to loath the thought of looking on me. Had he been, at that moment, what his letters promised, I would have leaned upon his arm for support; I would have thrown myself into his bosom, the child of his adoption; bathed in tears of joy, and
sighing

fighing forth the gratitude of my soul in the language of truth, and with the fervour of nature. But I was repulsed, and silent.

Still, Frances, still I will endeavour to be happy. I will not repay the long, long years of kindness, which I have experienced, by the sullen inquietude of disappointment. I will labour to conquer any evil prejudice which Lord Denmore's mind may entertain against me. Even though *he* is severe, *I* will not be ungrateful.

Yet, tell me, Frances, what could his conduct mean? Lord Denmore has feeling, he has philanthropy,—else had I not been in existence. I have never offended, he has never reproved me; what could his coldness portend? Must I, after having taught myself to love him more than a father, find him less even than a friend?

I have, twenty times, since that hour of humiliation, examined my features. There must be some trait which caused disgust so marked and unequivocal. I will endeavour to change the fashion of my looks; and yet, I fear that to dissemble, will be to make him hate me. I am perplexed, and know not how to please him.

On entering the Castle, I was conducted to Lady Denmore's apartment; formally announced by him that led me, and instantly left alone, with the lovely stranger. She embraced me kindly. I breathed a new being! The flower which the cold breeze chills, revives when it meets a partial sun-beam. I almost forgot, in the smiles of Lady Denmore, the unkindness, the freezing unkindness of her Lord.

She felt, and remarked the singularity of his conduct. She apologized for his

apparent coldness, at the same time that she attributed it to the sensibility of his heart. I was at a loss to comprehend the meaning of her words. "My Lord is too apt to indulge in melancholy ruminations," said she, "and of late he has been more than usually pensive. He had many conflicts to fear in this long-promised meeting. The memory of your parents, the delight of seeing his hopes so perfectly accomplished, the dread of hearing you thank him, and the fear that more might have been done in the task of friendship, could not fail to agitate and perplex him. 'Tis past; and, I trust, will soon be forgotten."

I sighed, and endeavoured to smile; but the recent check which my hopes had received, suited my mind to sadness more than pleasure: Lady Denmore read in my countenance the language of my heart, and changed the subject of our conversation.

We

We passed the remainder of the morning in rambling about the grounds, near the Castle. Still the frown of Lord Denmore occupied my thoughts, and his features seemed as if they were imprinted on my brain. The tone of his voice was yet vibrating on my ear; and the chilling hand with which he had led me, still, in imagination, grasped mine with its trembling fingers. Every moment appeared tedious till the hour of dinner, when expectation bade my bosom throb with a second conflict: for I had to undergo another trial of fortitude, a new source either of joy or humiliation. I had again to meet those eyes, whose austere and penetrating glances had already taught me to be wretched.

We were at a considerable distance from the Castle, when the bell was rung for dinner. Its vibration seemed to strike upon my heart: I hastened along the
shortest

shortest path, wholly forgetful of my companion, Lady Denmore, and reached the portico, while she was yet far from its entrance. As I passed the dining-room windows, I looked anxiously for my guardian: but I had not courage to meet him alone, and with a palpitating bosom waited the arrival of Lady Denmore. How long, ah, Frances! how painfully long did the moments appear, till I beheld her: but how shall I describe my disappointment, when I heard a servant inform her, that Lord Denmore was absent, and would not return till the evening?

A thousand conjectures darted across my brain, and still I remained in a state of suspense that was scarcely supportable. Lord Denmore's conduct, which at first seemed cold and unaccountable, was now rude and insulting. I felt an indignant sensation which, till that moment, had never filled my mind. I

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was restless and sullen; resolved to elucidate a mystery so obscure, or to depart from an asylum, which neither my pride nor my necessities would bend to acknowledge.

The evening advanced slowly, and it was near ten o'clock when Lord Denmore returned. On entering the room, his eyes instantly met mine. His colour changed, his voice faltered; he turned hastily from me, and conversed with every person present, excepting myself. The ball-room was full of company, assembled from the neighbourhood of the Castle, to celebrate the birth-day of the lovely hostess. I could not bear neglect before so many strangers, and therefore pleaded the fatigue of a long journey; apologized for my abrupt departure, and, without even glancing at Lord Denmore, retired to my chamber.

There,

There, Frances, I gave a full scope to sorrow. I wept a torrent of tears; I lamented the hour when I quitted that seminary, where we had lived from infancy together; and I grieved to find that, amidst the roses of prosperity, my bosom was doomed to ache with the thorn of disappointment.

I had not been long in my chamber, when a servant entered. She informed me that Lord Denmore had sent her to request I would command whatever I might wish to have; and assuring me, that "every possible precaution should be adopted, to prevent the least noise, which might disturb my rest." I heard, and was astonished.

"From whom did you bring this message," said I earnestly.

"From Lord Denmore."

"Lady Denmore you mean," said I, with anxious impatience.

"No,

“No, Madam,” replied the servant :
“I received the message from my Lord.
He repeated it twice, lest I should mistake his meaning. I am certain that I have delivered his Lordship’s words, precisely as he spoke them.”

“Did he seem offended at my leaving the ball-room?—How did he look?—In what tone did he speak?” inquired I.

“His voice was mild, and he seemed very earnest that you should have every attention paid you,” answered the servant.

“I will sup below,” said I. “Tell Lord Denmore that I will return immediately.” I could not refrain from tears.

As soon as the emotion of joy subsided, I descended to the supper-room ; but I had not resolution to enter. My eyes were red with crying, and my hair dishevelled ; for on retiring to my chamber,

chamber, I had thrown myself on my pillow, without being conscious of what I was doing. The servant's message made me forgetful of this circumstance, neither did I recollect it till I was at the door of the supper-room. While I stood meditating what to do, Lord Denmore quitted the apartment. He looked earnestly at me, stopped,—was preparing to speak, hesitated, darted forwards, and left me. He rushed into the library, and, shutting the door, violently rung the bell for his servant. I stood on the spot which he had quitted, like one transfixed with amazement. Every limb trembled, while a glow of resentment rushed over my cheek, and my heart throbbed with the extreme of indignation.

As I uttered "I will bear this unkindness no longer," Lord Denmore again came out of the library. He passed, to ascend the staircase; I flew towards him.

him. "Gertrude," said he, "why are you not in your chamber? Endeavour to compose your spirits,—you want sleep,—take my counsel, and retire.—This noise, and the heat of the ball-room, will only augment your fatigue." He proceeded a few steps towards the stairs; returned, seemed to have forgot the motive of his hesitation, pressed his hand upon his forehead, as if collecting his scattered thoughts, and then impatiently muttering,—“Well, well, it is no matter,”—hastened to his chamber, while I returned, disconsolate, to mine.

The night wasted in melancholy rumination. In vain I closed my eyes, and endeavoured to sleep. The strange and unexpected reception I had experienced, appeared still more unaccountable, when I recalled to mind the repeated and kind promises which his letters had conveyed to me. “Is this the reasoning, thinking, philanthropic
Lord

Lord Denmore?" said I. "Are such the manners, the feelings of the new world, to which I am emerging from obscurity? Am I to experience humiliations, to await the smiles, to tremble at the frowns of him, whom I loved as my father, but whom I now must consider as my governor?" I then questioned myself, whether I had been too sanguine in my hopes, too ambitious in my expectations; whether I had counted too largely on my own pretensions, or relied too implicitly on the generosity of my patron. I began to think that the ardour of my gratitude had led me to omit the ceremonies of respect; that I had met my friend, my liberal benefactor, with a smile of affectionate delight, when I should have attended to the cold formalities which are the companions of rank, the associates of indifference. I had heard, that modest worth was often taught to approach the exalted
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with a degrading humility; that the claims of merit were of little weight in the scale of interest, with those who are themselves debased by folly, or rendered torpid by ignorance. I began to feel that I was placed in the low ranks of fortune; that my preferment would depend on my obedience; my hopes rest on the quicksand basis of caprice or pride: that I must forget the innate stamp of virtue, and bend before the gigantic tyrant Custom, at whose nod the little and the great were taught to bow submissive.

The morning brightened before I was wearied with rumination. I was disgusted with every prospect before me; I found that, to please, and to be pleased, I must become a new being; that I should have little opportunity for the practice of those precepts which had been instilled into my mind; and that, before I could expect either prosperity or fame, I must
shake

shake off the natural associates of my heart, and place in their stead, before it, a shield, of variegated hues ; created by the hand of art, and coloured by the ever-varying power of fancy. So armed, I should be able to meet all tastes, to please all eyes ; to sooth the pensive, win the credulous, amaze the ignorant, and delight the gay ; my days would be gilded with perpetual sunshine ! my nights—Oh, Frances ! I dared not anticipate the hour of sober thought—the silent, calm, reflecting hour ! when reason would be broad awake, though giddy, empty folly, slumbered.

Early in the morning I quitted my pillow, descended to the library, selected a book to quiet my perturbed imagination, and letting myself out through the window, strolled towards a wood, which is not far distant from the Castle. At the termination of a dark and winding walk, a rude bridge of roots crossed a
swift

swift brook, which flowed from a neighbouring cascade. On the opposite bank, a small niche, covered with ivy, and facing the park, invited me to its shade. Ah, Frances! how rapidly does solitude increase the fever of dejection! When I quitted my chamber, I was wearied and exhausted by the perpetual pain of thought: but in this still, this romantic spot, I was little less than frantic. The stream rolled foaming along; the dark shadows which the venerable trees threw around me every moment thickened, and I was absorbed in the very stupor of sorrow.

I passed the rude bridge, and seated myself in the gloomy niche which had, by its melancholy shade, invited my attention. I opened my book, but my eyes were dim with tears; and a strange, a mournful presentiment prevented my reading. In a few minutes I heard a carriage advancing towards the front of
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the Castle, and rising hastily, observed that the postillions wore Lord Denmore's livery. Concluding that he was about to depart, and unconscious of what I was meditating, I rushed towards the bridge :—my eyes were still fixed upon the carriage, my feet could scarcely support me ; I lost all recollection of the narrow pass, and fell ;—the wild water overpowered me ; the foam rolled over my bosom ; I was dashed by its force against the rocky fragments that were scattered along the stream ; and, in a few moments, I ceased to feel sensible of my situation.

Alas ! Frances, why, why did I not perish ?

When sensation returned, I found myself in the protection of Lord Denmore. I felt the pressure of his trembling arms ; his warm breath reanimated my cheek, while his voice feebly arti-

culated, " My soul ! my Gertrude ! look up, revive, speak to me."

I breathed, I sighed, I sunk upon his bosom. The fall had stunned me ; the water was shallow, but rapid ; I was wounded on the temple, but I was sensible of Lord Denmore's agitation. I beheld his face pale, his eyes gazing tenderly on me ; and oh ! my friend ! oh, Frances ! I heard such accents as made me doubt this sublunary scene, and fancy myself even in Elysium.

Lord Denmore still supported my feeble frame : he pressed me to his heart ; he tenderly embraced me. I repulsed him with my trembling arm : he shuddered ; then suddenly recovering from the delirium of joy, he started from the ground where he was kneeling, and promising, with a faltering voice, to send me assistance, instantly departed.

I was

I was soon after led back to the Castle by Lady Denmore, who informed me, with a look which almost petrified my bosom, that her husband had set out for London. I was now convinced that she had, from the Castle window, beheld all that had happened: a frown which she could not suppress, a flush of indignation which I could not but observe, gave proofs of resentment mingled with disdain. I was wounded to the soul! I stole with tottering steps to my chamber, (faint with the loss of blood which still flowed from my temple,) where, exhausted by mental conflicts, I fell into a feverish slumber.

Since that period till yesterday, I have been confined to my apartment. Lady Denmore frequently passed many hours near my pillow, but with a cold formality, little calculated to sooth the inquietude of an afflicted bosom.—Farewell.

LETTER III.

The Same to the Same.

June 21, 1796.

SINCE I wrote my last letter, I have been removed to Lady Denmore's dressing-room: a slow fever has enfeebled me considerably, and the unfavourable symptoms are hourly augmented by the agitation of my mind. Why has my guardian left me to endure the severity of Lady Denmore's frowns? Why was I removed from my long-loved asylum, to experience the humiliations of a painful dependence? If the proud could be taught to feel, how often would they blush at the miseries they inflict; how severely would compunction chastise them for the pangs which they teach the unfortunate to experience.

experience; and how base, how abject would ostentation appear, when compared with the fostering charm of genuine philanthropy? How many bestow their favours on the unhappy, with a cold disdainful arrogance, which wounds more than it consoles the sorrows of sensibility! And yet, where Fortune frowns, where necessity propels, the proudly enlightened mind is frequently condemned to bear the insolence of wealth, the pomp of pity, the vaunted humanity of pride, and the pang of smothered indignation. Grant me, oh! grant me, Heaven, an humble independence; whether it be in the busy din of life, or in the poorest hovel of the desert heath, and I will receive it gladly: I will cherish the dear boon, however scanty; and from the eminence of conscious truth look down with pity on the littleness of splendour.

The chamber of sickness is the school of meditation. There the mind, abstracted from trivial occupations, weighs in the even scale of justice all the pains and pleasures of existence. Reason there predominates over Prejudice, and we shake off her deceptive visions, as the light of truth expands by rumination. —Adieu.

LETTER IV.

The Same to the Same.

June 23, 1796.

SHORTLY after I closed my last letter, I fell into a deep sleep, which continued till I was startled by a rustling in the apartment. On opening my eyes, I beheld Lord Denmore seated near the
sofa

sofa on which I rested. The surprise which his presence excited took from me the power of utterance. His countenance was melancholy, his arms were folded; his eyes, bent earnestly on mine, were full of tears. "Gertrude," said he, "I trust that you will credit my sincerity, when I declare that, since I quitted the Castle, I have never ceased to think of you." I could not reply, but rose from the sofa. He took my arm, and gently placing it within his, supported my tottering steps towards the window.

"I hope you are pleased with Lady Denmore's attentions," said he; "and that you begin to feel satisfied with your future home? Here you may command every thing that my fortune can procure. I know of nothing in this trifling world that can render me more happy than the conviction that you are so." I answered him with a sigh of gratitude; a sigh
c 4 which

which spoke the language of Nature, and consequently could not be misinterpreted. "Your Lordship's generosity is boundless. You make thanks poor, by the profusion of your kindness," said I.

Lord Denmore shook his head, and smiled. "Have you already learnt to flatter, Gertrude," said he: "beware, my amiable girl, you are venturing on a quicksand —"

"I cannot utter what my heart does not feel," said I.

"Then your feelings are wonderfully forgiving," rejoined Lord Denmore; "for my conscience tells me that you have lately had but little cause to thank me; and if you would allow your heart to confess ingenuously, you would acknowledge that my conscience is no deceiver."

"I have perhaps offended by some undesigned neglect," said I. "If I am
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to blame, I owe the fault to Nature, or to education : for Heaven can witness, my Lord, it was involuntary."

" I feel your reproof, Gertrude," answered my guardian ; " and I deserve to feel it. But you must not know the power you possess over my mind ; or knowing it, you must forbear to exercise it harshly." I was confused, and trembled ; my eyes were fixed upon the ground, and my heart beat with convulsive quickness.

" Gertrude," continued Lord Denmore, " I begin to fear that you are too amiable, too interesting. I shall love you more than I ought."

" Not more than I will deserve, my Lord."

" This is a scene of transient happiness," answered he ; " and we should not build our hopes, where every storm of fate is destined to destroy them. If I had cherished a sweet flower, till it

displayed its hues, and breathed forth its fragrance, would I place it at the summit of a mountain, exposed to every change of atmosphere, to scorching suns, and midnight vapours?"

"I do not comprehend you, my Lord," said I.

"It is not fit you should," replied my guardian. "You must be ignorant of your power, or you will use it like a tyrant."

"Why do you think so, my Lord?"

"Because you are a woman—a being which we only govern by seeming not to fear."

"Can you fear that which looks to you for protection?" said I.

"Pretty reasoner!" answered Lord Denmore. "I am not to be convinced by the sophistry of beauty. I shall not listen where I am determined not to be persuaded. I am a philosopher in the school of Nature; I have studied her fascinations;

fascinations; and I can resist them, even from the lips, or on the blush, of its fairest offspring. I am a cynic, a very cynic, when my understanding is likely to be the dupe of my affections. I know all your faults; you are proud and impatient; your sensibility is too acute; your resentment too hasty."

"I plead guilty, my Lord," said I.

"And I acquit you," interrupted my guardian. "But have a care how you transgress in future. I shall watch with jealous eyes; I shall not suffer that proud impetuous heart to tyrannise with impunity."

"Indeed, my Lord——"

"Nay! no promises!" said Lord Denmore. "I will be confident. I will rely on your prudence, your discretion; you, in your turn, shall command my services, my esteem, my affection."

Lady Denmore now entered the room, and my guardian abruptly departed.

At dinner his manners became still more softened ; he laughed and talked, even on trifling subjects. His assiduities were soothing, doubly soothing, when contrasted with his former austerity. My heart palpitated with a fervour of affection, almost agonizing. I never before experienced any thing like it. Remember, Frances, I never knew my parents.—Adieu.

LETTER V.

The Same to the Same.

June 28, 1796.

TO-MORROW is my birth-day. To-morrow, Frances, I shall complete my seventeenth year ; a large party is expected, to stay three weeks at the Castle ; and a rural *fete* is preparing, to celebrate an event

event which I shall, perhaps, live to lament in sadness.

It is impossible to describe the effect which Lord Denmore's humour produces on my mind: the waverings of his temper seem like the thermometer which raises or depresses my spirits almost with a magical, and certainly with a sympathetic dominion. When he is gay, I am the happiest of mortals; when his fine expressive countenance assumes the sombre cast of melancholy, which it too frequently does, I feel a load of depression, which I can neither support nor shake from my senses. Then his tone of voice is so strongly indicative of the sensations in his bosom; he speaks low when he is inclined to meditation; some would say, sternly; but, I think, impressively. When he is less pensive, for I have seldom seen him gay, he smiles, as though he thought vivacity a proof of a trifling disposition; but

but his smile has something in it more divine than human; perhaps being seldom seen, it bears a charm which would be lost by repetition.

He passes all his forenoons either in the library, or in walking round the most retired part of the grounds. He is never without a book for his companion, excepting when he permits me to attend him, which has been the case for several successive mornings. He then reads to me; the most enlightened authors are selected for our studies,—and we prolong the hours, sometimes till noon is far advanced, and Lady Denmore, having quitted her toilet, expects our company.

It is perhaps somewhat singular, but so far from waiting with pleasing, anxious expectation, for the approaching festival, I look forward to it with a sensation of discontent; because I fear it will put a period to our intellectual walks;

walks; that Lord Denmore will adopt some other plan of passing his morning hours; and, being once inclined to change his occupations, will reluctantly, or perhaps never, be induced to renew them. I am so charmed, so delighted with our solitary rambles, that I know not how I should be able to endure any new method of cultivating time; every other amusement would seem to waste it.

Lady Denmore is astonished that I can devote so many hours to study; and daily proposes riding, music, driving her curricule, or fishing on the lake, which is formed by various and uniting streams from the cascade. She is disgusted with every thing rustic; but, notwithstanding her abhorrence of retirement, Lord Denmore has relinquished his town establishment; and, whenever either choice or business demands his presence, he resides in Portman-Square, with the Duchess of

6 Aldborough,

Aldborough, his mother-in-law; she is shortly expected at the Castle, and report gives her the most enviable character.

Among those who have promised to visit us at the approaching *fête*, I hear the names of Lord and Lady Melcomb; Sir Hector Upas and his beautiful young wife; the Reverend Mr. Treville, and Miss Emma Cecil, the daughter of the late Lord Limmingsford. I have heard a brief account of these fashionable personages from Lady Denmore; and, excepting Lady Upas, the impression which their portraits have made upon my mind excites but little interest in their favour. Lady Denmore, nevertheless, spoke in terms of more than ordinary esteem, when Mr. Treville was the subject of delineation; and even hinted that he had been the object of her early choice; but that the Duchess her mother, who, with all her virtues, has
no

no small portion of family pride, selected from the peerage the title of Countess of Denmore, as the most desirable for her beloved and only daughter. At this period Lady Harriet Langton was only eighteen years of age, extremely beautiful, and no less amiable than lovely. Mr. Treville had aspired to the distinction of her favour; but being engaged to travel with young a nobleman, on a promise that all the interest of the family should be employed for his advancement, he departed for Italy. Lady Harriet, piqued by his easy acquiescence in a separation which left her at her mother's disposal, and pressed to accept the addresses of the fascinating Lord Denmore, yielded to their united importunities.

After four years absence, Mr. Treville returned to England polished by his travels, and advanced in church preferment. His pupil shortly after died
of

of a decline, owing to the intemperance of his life while resident on the continent, and an annuity of eight hundred pounds was bequeathed to his juvenile tutor, who immediately launched on the broad sea of life, a finished model for the whole school of clerical non-descripts. Too polite to be religious; too witty to be learned; too youthful to be serious; and too handsome to be discreet: in four words, a fashionable divine, divinely fashionable!

From the period of Mr. Treville's return, he has been inrolled in the list of Lady Denmore's dangles; and though the propriety of her conduct, and the *esteem* she entertains for her husband, afford little hopes of his being a successful votary, he is her constant attendant; never failing to embrace every opportunity of piquing her pride, or awakening her jealousy, by ridiculing the manners and pursuits of Lord Denmore,

more, and by pretending a passion for all her female associates. Notwithstanding this violation of feeling and of friendship, he has contrived to hold a powerful spell over Lady Denmore's affections; and to insinuate himself into the confidence of her Lord, who believes him to be one of the most perfect of mortals.

I continue to think that the sombre cast of rumination, which, by habitual indulgence, has marked Lord Denmore's features, is more impressivè than even the vivacity of other objects. Lord Denmore's figure is graceful; his countenance dark and regular; his eyes are black and penetrating; his teeth white; his complexion rather fallow than animated; and his voice peculiarly fascinating. With this outline, you will easily perceive that Lord Denmore is handsome;—while I pronounce him
more;

more; he is interesting. His every look, his every word, touches the heart; and it is not necessary that a man, at the age of eight-and-thirty, a man of sense; a reasoning, rational, experienced mortal, should be always smiling.—Adieu.

LETTER VI.

The Same to the Same.

Denmore Castle, July 6, 1796.

THIS perpetual merriment begins to tire the senses; imagination sickens; and the satiety which irrational pleasures inevitably produce, is the most vapid that the mind can experience. We look back without the hope of finding a single impression, which can either delight or improve the understanding; while

while we lament that the gay perspective is vanished for ever; knowing that its only claim to our attention was the novelty of the moment.

I heartily wish that the din of revelry would subside, and that I could, once more, resume the tranquil occupations of study and seclusion. Lord Denmore is the only being, in this gay circle, who evinces any thing like mental gratification: still he steals from the trifling senseless throng, to converse with those sober monitors of the heart, the works of wiser objects, the pride of better days. How much do I envy him!

I promised to give you some account of our guests. Heaven shield my hand from the exercise of a pen which delineates with the dark shades of prejudice, or hurries along the malevolent line of sarcastic barbarity. Yet it is the duty of impartial writers to place merit in the full lustre of its own brilliancy;

brilliancy; and to shew the deformity of vice, in the clear, but faithful mirror of reflection: so prepared, I give you the group before me.

Lord Melcomb is an easy, pliant, well-bred husband; the viscountess would be polished; but the pebble must, in vain, attempt the lustre of the brilliant. Miss Cecil is every thing, and nothing; she has a little of all things consequential, and yet the sum total of her acquirements scarcely exceeds the claim of insignificance. Mr. Treville is the epitome of every thing admired, and every thing frivolous; while his good qualities, if he has any, are so totally eclipsed by vanity, that he seems to act as a perpetual shadow on his own imagined splendour.

Lord Denmore has little relish for dissipated scenes; he is almost a cynic among the ephemera of gaudy life; but in the sweetly calm seclusion of
reason

reason and of study, he is the very sun of intellect! I am astonished when I recollect that he is wedded to Lady Denmore.

Within these few days she is become, at times, peevish and capricious. She ridicules my taste for books, and has more than once said, that I should "have made an excellent wife to such a pedant as Lord Denmore." I cannot account for my folly; but the remark called forth a blush upon my cheek, which the innocence of my heart was unable to interpret. She laughed—provokingly she laughed; and I fancied that there was malice in her mirth. Perhaps I was mistaken.

I often recollect the peril from which Lord Denmore snatched me; and I contemplate the wild brook with a melancholy pleasure, because on its rough current I first experienced an interest so touching, a sensation so fraught with gratitude,

gratitude, that it never can be forgotten. Ah, Frances! Had not Lord Denmore interposed at that moment, I had ceased to breathe. To him I owe existence; and on him its pains or its pleasures will depend, while I am capable of feeling his worth, or my own obligations. To Lady Denmore I am but little indebted; she hourly teaches me to remember the favour she bestows; and, by reminding my heart of its duty, takes from it the refinement of esteem. Affection must be the voluntary offering of the mind; that which is extorted can never be lasting; the senses grow fatigued under the exercise of a duty which would, by assuming the form of a pleasure, become habitual.—Farewell.

LETTER VII.

*Lady DENMORE to the Duchess of
ALDBOROUGH.*

July 10, 1796.

How strangely organized is the mind of woman! How often are we the dupes of appearances; and how prone to apprehensions which assail and undermine our happiness!

You will already perceive that I am dissatisfied, alarmed, suspicious: this Gertrude St. Leger, this child of Lord Denmore's adoption!—what is there about this emancipated wonder, that melts every bosom into sympathy, that absorbs the very soul, and claims the undivided attentions even of the reasoning, the frigid Lord Denmore?

Yet I will believe that she is virtuous; I will hope that my husband is honorable. The memory of a lost friend may mould the heart to indelible impressions, such as pity may applaud, and reason sanction by esteem. But esteem is a placid, steady sentiment; it is a clear and tempered flame; it warms, but does not dazzle; it may be participated; it does not monopolize every thought, fasten on every faculty, possess the soul, and command, exclusively command, all its affections.

What is the spell which binds Lord Denmore's heart to the interest of this stranger? I am bewildered by conjectures. Develope the mystery; convince me by your better judgment; soothe my wounded pride, and tranquillize my imagination.

Gertrude has been slightly indisposed; and Lord Denmore's inquietude was more marked than reasonable. He
could

could not, with all his assumed serenity, conceal it. I found him watching while she slumbered; I have seen him lose the colour of his cheek, when she complained of pain, or evinced uneasiness. The language he utters when he addresses her, is the language of affection. Even in her presence he commends with rapture; and, when she is absent, his mind becomes restless, as though the vacuum could bear no other object. Gertrude is an artful girl; Lord Denmore is but a mortal: I am his wife; and the successor of passion, is satiety.

This change in his manner, this fascination, this enchainment of soul, was first discovered by Mr. Treville. He suggested to me the danger of fostering such an inmate, and the ridicule which my tame acquiescence would excite in the world of spirit and discernment. I have no proof that Gertrude

is the orphan of Major St. Leger; I may be deceived; and this seeming child of nature, this miracle of sentiment and beauty, is, perhaps, some artful wanton, selected for the licentious embraces of an inconstant husband. I will extract the thorn which rankles in my bosom; I will not wither in the mazes of suspicion. I will either prove Lord Denmore guiltless, or I will demand an immediate separation.

Why was I ever united to a man whose disposition is so unlike my own? Why was I persuaded to sacrifice the early affections of my heart at the tinsel altar of ambition? I can admire Lord Denmore's understanding; I can revere the opinions which it has adopted; as a preceptor, as a brother, I could love him;—but, as a husband, the refinement of my feelings will never give him a claim beyond respect and friendship. You will say that I am
jealous

jealous of his attentions, and you will consider that single sensation as a tacit denial of all that I have written: ah! my dearest madam, you know but little of the human heart, if you are not sensible that there are many kinds of jealousy: the jealousy of pride, of envy, of friendship, and of love. Mine, of Lord Denmore, originates in the first; of the last, I need not tell you where the object dwells who can exclusively excite it:—such a declaration would seem like a reproof; and I feel too proud a sense of your goodness in every instance, excepting only *one*, to utter a thought which may have the appearance of ingratitude.—Farewell, dearest of mothers.

LETTER VIII.

The Same to the Same.

July 14, 1796.

THIS morning, on entering Lord Denmore's library unexpectedly, I found him earnestly employed in reading a letter. His confusion was evident; he hastily, and with a trembling hand folded the cover; then spoke rapidly on several trifling subjects, till he found a convenient moment for abruptly leaving me.

By the side of the chair, on which he had been seated, I found a small lock of auburn hair, beautifully braided. It was of the same colour as the deceitful Gertrude's! I secured this proof of her confidence: I secured it to convict their crime, and to authorise my just resentment.

ment. This is not a chimera of the brain: the forcerefs Jealousy has not conjured up a phantom to mislead me. The evidence amounts to such conviction as shall make the libertine confess his folly, while the shrewd, subtle, soft, domestic serpent, shall shrink at her own falsehood.

How wisely did Mr. Treville warn me of my danger; how prophetic were his words.—“ You will be the dupe of your mistaken confidence, when your humiliation is complete; for contempt will awaken you from your dream, to mock your credulity.”

I am awakened! I feel, I shrink beneath the lash of ridicule! But I will yet have stronger proofs. I will devote ten days to incessant watching. They shall not escape the prying eyes of wounded honour; and, strengthened by the certitude of their infamy, by the energy of scorn, I will then act decisively.

LETTER IX.

GERTRUDE *to* FRANCES.

July 18, 1796.

THE weariness of disgust hourly augments, with the unmeaning gaiety of the scene before me; and what the spirit of vivacity would eagerly enjoy, what the animated bosom of thoughtless youth would deem the very excess of delight, seems to me but a tedious epocha, devoted to folly and dissipation. The morning is ushered in with rustic sports; the hour of noon is devoted to festivity; and the evening closes amidst smiles, produced by the most exhilarating scenes; where music, dancing, and a supper, served with all the elegance of rural decoration, blend to enchant and fascinate every individual,

vidual, excepting the pensive, melancholy Gertrude!

Why am I thus thoughtfully misanthropic? why do I steal away from the lively group, and stroll alone among woods, gloomy and solitary? Why, when the smile of joy animates every cheek,—ah! why is mine alone conscious of a tear, which neither reason nor the force of example can suppress?

Frances, there is something undescribably torturing in the uncertainty which marks my fate. I have grown from childhood in a state of expectation: hope has been perpetually taught to tremble, and fear has so often agitated my bosom, that the sense of resistance, the strong nerve of fortitude is at last become inert and feeble. I now look forward to some change of situation painfully humiliating; I scarcely dare anticipate an hour of happiness; and even the pleasures that present

D 5

them.

themselves seem but flattering visions, as fleeting as they are deceptive. Ah! my friend! wretched is the mortal whose hopes hang on the fragile thread, which every breath of calumny may shake; which every change of sentiment, springing either from caprice or malevolence, may rend asunder.

How am I to exist in this state of mysterious dependence? If, after months and years of assiduous gratitude I should, in an unfortunate moment, offend my patron, what will be my destiny? Perhaps I shall be driven to seek for support from a taunting world; to depend on the smiles of the unfeeling, or to sink beneath the frowns of the wealthy and ostentatious. Dreadful humiliation! How should I bear it? Could this proud, this susceptible heart, stoop to the debasement of flattering the unworthy? Could this tongue utter the language of a servile sycophant?

fawn

fawn on the vicious,—court the abandoned,—praise where I despise, and yield where I felt conscious of superiority?—Impossible!

I contemplate the group by which I am surrounded;—I contemplate them with a mixture of disgust and pity; while I consider Lord Denmore as a superior constellation, shedding its solitary light over a dark hemisphere. I am neither fastidious nor splenetic; I will give you a fair and candid description of my associates as I received it from Lord Denmore, and then leave you to form your own opinion.

“ Lord Melcomb is one of those mortals who are born neither to degrade nor benefit society. He is tenacious of the rank in life to which Fortune has consigned him; and, considering a title as the sure passport to respect, pays little regard to the virtues of private life, or the clamours of public reputation. He

may be said to live without tasting any of the pleasures of existence : he eats, drinks, and sleeps, because it is natural to do so ; he encourages the arts, because he is fond of being thought their patron. He is indiscriminately generous, merely to augment the number of his dependents ; and he enters into the prodigalities of the trifling world, for no other reason than to evince his superior rank over the vulgar and less fortunate.

“ With this disposition to follow his inclinations, because they led to a false consequence, and afforded him a degree of celebrity which neither refined feeling, nor a superior organization of mind, could procure for him, he started upon the town at an early age ; possessed of a handsome person, great suavity of manners, a peculiar sweetness of temper, many fashionable accomplishments, and the expectation of a splendid fortune.

But,

But, in order to counteract these superficial claims, Nature had impressed his mind with a constitutional timidity, which every breath could awaken, and every trivial circumstance alarm. By this unfortunate characteristic, he was at once the slave and the dupe of his dependents. He shrunk at the slightest imputation of error; and trembled at those calumnies which his resolution ought to have suppressed. After wandering about the world in search of happiness; after squandering thousands in the pursuit of pleasures, which his capricious never-resting mind was incapable of enjoying; he resolved to seek a partner for life in some wealthy dame, whose fortune might repair his shattered finances, and whose commanding spirit might decisively regulate his future conduct.

“ This species of domestic appendage was soon obtained. The Lord wanted a
rich

rich wife ; the Lady sighed for a titled husband. The useless forms of courtship were too unfashionable for this worldly pair ; the folly of love and sentimental attachment was beneath their exalted opinions ; they met, they estimated their mutual advantages, and they were married.

“ The reins of government being now at the disposal of his better half, Lord Melcomb patiently resigned himself to a tacit insignificance. His name was scarcely mentioned in the world of splendour ; and his hours were divided between the society of a few professional dependents, and the wholesome lectures of his despotic arbitress. He retained nothing of nobility, but his name ; a name once distinguished on the annals of heroic warfare ; a name which was once the least, as it is now the greatest, ornament of its possessor.

“ Lord

“ Lord Denmore, from his youth, has been the intimate of Lord Melcomb’s family. He has been one of the very few, who have not aided their star’s descent on the horizon of fashion; or, like a summer cloud, eclipsed its rays, even in the zenith of their lustre. His friendship has not deserted the sinking consequence of his friend, though his indignation has never failed to mark the vulgar importance of his associate; who, sprung from nothing, is perpetually aiming at every thing; and whose origin glares, with unequivocal traits, through the gilded veil which Fortune has thrown over its possessor.”—Such is the portrait of Lord Melcomb and his fair tutorefs; of whom I shall probably give you a more enlarged resemblance at some future period.

With regard to Sir Hector Upas and his lovely bride, I shall briefly repeat Lord Denmore’s words:—“ Sir
Hector

Hector is an illiterate, pompous block-head ; an ostentatious, vain, avaricious speculator ; a man whom Science knows not, but whom the Arts have raised to opulence and splendour. Accustomed to tyrannize, he is an enemy to every species of merit which opposes the rights of superior mental worth to the adventitious claims of fortune. Sir Hector originally moved in the lowly sphere of a scavenger. His perambulations in the dust-cart of his ancestors first fired his mind with ideas of an exalted nature : from thence he looked down upon the multitude ; till destiny removed him from the car of honest industry to the honours of a night-cellar in the vicinity of St. Giles's. Here he became acquainted with an eccentric nobleman, whose capricious fancy frequently led him to the midnight haunts of vulgar dissipation. Hector was a shrewd boy ; the peer was an observer of nature.

The

The *protégée* became worthy of the patron; and Hector was soon exalted to the rank of confidential purveyor of the pleasurable department.

“ Here he did not fail to promote the interest he had acquired; and his Lord, being a *dilittanti* in the fine arts, the pliant deputy soon became an adept in their most intricate occupations. The sacrifice of innocence, the annihilation of domestic peace, and the ruin of a friend, by the machinations of intrigue or the tricks of a gaming-table, were now familiar to him. Thus, all accomplished, he became the master of his employer’s secrets, and consequently the ruler of his actions. What he could not acquire by cunning, he obtained by effrontery; till, partly by address, and partly by arrogance, he hourly enriched himself, though poverty and the loss of reputation menaced his unthinking employer.

“ The

“ The noble patron died—unpitied, unlamented ! The pride of his family trembled, when the trusty Hector became the entire possessor of that talisman, which was to mark the memory of his deceased employer. Added to his unbounded scope of power, on the score of secret anecdote, wherein all the vices of the human heart were registered with a vaunted exactitude ; where pompous villany frowned destruction on the unfortunate, and oppression hurled its pernicious arrows at the unsuspecting breast of innocence ; this sapient minister of vice received a legacy of five thousand pounds, with the wardrobe and jewels of the deceased libertine. Thus equipped with the means of following Fortune to her most propitious regions, the consequential Upas embarked with powerful recommendations, for the prolific plains of Asia ; where, innured from his infancy to dirty occupations, he rose
by

by his own lightness; and while his most estimable and distinguished contemporaries toiled slowly up the rugged road of fame, or laboured for Fortune's favours, to employ them in the service of benevolence, he soared like a pestilential cloud, and amidst the reiterated groans of desolation, triumphed with impunity.

"Eighteen years completed the career of Fortune; at the termination of which period he set sail for England; his bosom armed against compunction; his gross unwieldy form bloated by luxury; his memory of past events become torpid; and his hopes of future greatness as boundless as his fortune. He feared not the tauntings of an envious world, or the retrospect which officious biographers may take of events, long buried in the obscurity of time. The illiterate Hector possessed a brilliant fortune; and the brightness of his claims dazzled the eyes of scrutinizing justice."

Such

Such was the history which Lord Denmore gave me; and such is the man whom the world receives without a blush of hesitation; who disgraces the soil in which he rose to splendour; to whom the worthy and the enlightened are compelled to yield precedence; and who, bloated with the prodigality of wealth, dares boldly to insult the pre-eminence of genius! and who knows but Time, as he passes over this ill-judging, indiscriminating sphere, may behold this weed, this rank weed, sprung from the very dregs of filth and profligacy, marked by those honours, which should reward the sons of virtue and of valour!

Lord and Lady Melcomb are gone to Bath for a few days. When I am better acquainted with their pretensions to notice, I shall make them the subjects of a future letter.—Adieu.

LETTER X.

The Same to the Same.

Denmore Castle, July 22, 1796.

I AM not superstitious: I am no believer in that undefinable impulse which is generally called presentiment. Yet, I know not why, but a trembling agitation at times possesses my heart; and I fear some unknown power, at the same moment that I ought to rest confident of protection.

Lord Denmore! why does my hand feel a pulsation doubly quickened, while I write his name? Lord Denmore is my guardian, my friend; I am the child of his adoption; and yet—Ah! Frances! yet I tremble.

Lady Denmore is wholly changed in her conduct towards me. There is a cold

cold reserve in her manner, a severity in her frown, a smiling contempt, or a sullen taciturnity, perpetually predominating over the constrained civilities due to me as her guest, and as the *protégée* of her husband. Lord Denmore has remarked the change; to *me* he has remarked it! I forbore to make any comment which might sound like the complaining of a discontented spirit. Yet, though my tongue was silent, my heart poured forth the deep sigh of sorrow; and the throb of regret could not be chased away by the smile of forced forbearance.

Under the influence of prejudice, the noblest passions of the mind are frequently perverted; and the mild, the soul-enchanting affections are too often contaminated by opinions which poison all their sweetness. Lady Denmore's youth, her beauty, her accomplishments, should exonerate her, at least, from the imputation

tation of one failing. She does not, she cannot, entertain a *jealous* thought; she will not condescend to fear a rival; she dares not suspect *me* of dishonour, *her husband* of infidelity.

Then why am I alarmed? why do I doubt and tremble? why does the circulation quicken at my heart, when I reflect that Lord Denmore is henceforth destined to be the tutor of my youth, the guide of all my actions? Is it the timidity of respect; the veneration which is due to his virtues? Does this apprehension originate in that awe which a superior being never fails to awaken in minds conscious of their own fallibility? It must be so. What else can agitate, alarm, perplex, and shake me? With a firm reliance on his rectitude, on my own principles of honour, what can I have to apprehend? I will be just to him and to myself; I will fear nothing:

I will

I will teach this capricious Lady Denmore to esteem me; to permit, to sanction, the friendship of my patron.

You will say, it is easier to alarm a jealous mind, than to convince it. Yet, as Lady Denmore is offended without reason, so, by reason, may she be taught to pardon. I will hope.— I will endeavour to be tranquil. Fate cannot be so barbarous, as to remove me from the solitude of innocence, to place me in a path of peril, where my reason cannot guide me safely.— Adieu.

LETTER XI.

*The Duchess of ALDBOROUGH to Lady
DENMORE.*

Portman-Square, July 24, 1796.

WITH undescribable sorrow I perused your last letter. I traced in every line the conflicts of a mind misguided by self-love; and, without taking time to examine the causes of its suspicions, anticipating their effects.

Beware, my Harriet, beware how you harbour a stranger passion in your bosom: a passion the most pernicious, the most deceptive, that can contaminate the human heart. Believe me, the poison of jealousy is more subtle than the most potent drug; more certain than the most contagious disease to which the mortal frame is subjected by Nature.

If the counsels of a mother and a friend, if the honour of your family or the affections of your husband, be yet dear to you, I charge you, by each and by all, to resist, to vanquish this fiend that will destroy you.

Gertrude St. Leger is entitled to your sympathy, to your protection, because she is unfortunate. If pity for her inexperienced youth, her orphaned infancy, her dependent situation, will not plead in behalf of such a being; let pride, and the consciousness of your own claims, shield your bosom against the shafts of envy and detraction. Repulse the busy meddling fool, who would awaken a scorpion that will sting you; and let him feel, that neither artifice nor calumny can destroy that sacred spell, which unites your felicity to the honour of your husband.

I fear

I fear that the period of my intended visit to Denmore Castle must still be protracted. My health demands the constant attendance of a physician; and the declining hour of age is best employed in that stillness of meditation, which your gay and giddy circle would perpetually interrupt. I must therefore, at least for the present, decline your invitation. If I were disposed to overcome the scruples which my love of quiet suggests, the subject of your last letter would counteract the effort. I should blush to witness either your folly or the humiliation of the ill-fated Gertrude.

Again I conjure you not to cherish those destructive fears, which have, in defiance of your sober judgment, crept into your heart. Consider the orphan Gertrude as a rare exotic, transplanted to a gaudy *parterre*; where, though surrounded with many roses, it

is also assailed by thorns, and overshadowed with weeds. Suffer the sweet flower to expand, before you crush it. Permit not the breath of slander to contaminate its freshness; and, above all, let not its beauty be thrown, exclusively, on the protection of Lord Denmore.

LETTER XII.

*Lady DENMORE to the Duchess of
ALDBOROUGH.*

Denmore Castle, July 27, 1796.

YOUR precepts have ever been sacred to my heart. I have followed them implicitly, from a conviction that they flowed from the purest source; from a mind fraught with the gentlest virtues, and a bosom warmed by the affections
of

of a benignant nature. Yet, in the present moment of despair, I cannot obey you. Gertrude is a domestic serpent; Lord Denmore is a seducer. Hear my story: draw from its tenor your own inference, and then acquit me of unworthy suspicions. It has lately been Lord Denmore's custom to pass some hours in his library, after the domestics retire to rest. The inquietude of his mind could not escape observation less vigilant than mine; and the singular seclusion which he chooses at midnight could not fail to cherish suspicions already excited in my bosom. For the purpose of receiving that conviction, which might exonerate me from the imputation of jealousy ill-founded, last night I resolved on making an experiment which should either prove his guilt, or restore my mind to its interrupted tranquillity. At midnight I descended from my chamber, resolved

to rush into the presence of my false husband, and to accuse the smiling hypocrite, whom, at that moment, I considered as the destroyer of my happiness. Tremblingly I approached the door, and was preparing to enter the room, when Lord Denmore's voice exclaimed, "Oh, angel! injured and beloved angel! this silent hour I dedicate to thee." I could scarcely support my sinking frame. I sighed, I shuddered. Again he spoke, and again I heard him utter, "When, when shall I experience that long-looked-for hour, which shall unite us eternally? Soon shall this weary, painful scene be closed; and the bond, which makes life hateful, shall be broken." As he articulated these words, he walked hastily about the room; his voice was faltering, and, at some moments, scarcely audible. My consternation was undescrivable!

As

As he finished the last sentence, I heard a kind of rustling on the staircase; and concluding that some of the domestics, in the interest of my guilty husband, were placed to watch me, I hastily returned to my chamber. In a few minutes Lord Denmore presented himself before me: his features bore evidence of his secret thoughts; he was absent and mysterious; his cheek attempted a complacent smile; but the effort was counteracted by the insolence of disgust, while my heart was doubly wounded by his falsehood. The night passed in sullen taciturnity.

Soon after breakfast, Mr. Treville requested leave to speak with me alone. "I have something to communicate which nearly interests your feelings," said he; "and my esteem for you is such, that I cannot any longer behold you the dupe of artful machinations." This was conveyed in a whisper; and no person

person being near the balcony where we stood, I replied, without apprehension, "Be explicit; to what do you allude, and whom am I to suspect?"

"Promise that you will be prudent," said Mr. Treville, "for, of all characters upon earth, that of a mischief-maker is my aversion. But my regard for virtue and for you is not to be swayed by prudential motives; I cannot methodize my feelings where they tend to promote your felicity." He now drew from his pocket a letter, addressed to Lord Denmore. It was the same which I had before observed my husband reading. I remembered the mourning wax, and the smallness of the impression. The edges of the paper are worn away with frequent folding; some of the lines are nearly effaced, as if with tears. Every word is a volume of guilt; every expression will convict the writer, and stamp indelible disgrace upon the monster

ster who has deceived me. This is not the resentment of imaginary wrongs; I have now brought conviction to a climax; and my vengeance shall be as singular as the magnitude of their infamy.

(Letter inclosed in the preceding.)

"I AM a new-created being! I live, I breathe only for your happiness! All the claims of gratitude and honour, all the meek proprieties of life, are violated, and yet I exist, I blush while I confess the important secret, I exist, only in your affections.

"How, oh! tell me how I shall meet those eyes, which will read on my burning cheek the consciousness of error? Whither shall I fly, to avoid the reproaches of that mortal, whose severest censure will be too mild for the

enormity of my guilt. Remove me from this scene of painful recollection, where every object seems to reproach me, and every pleasure sinks into the sadness of compunction.

“ Ah ! wherefore am I the dupe of my own heart ? Why do I believe that it is guarded against the anguish, the acute anguish of conscious reprehension ? Why do I vainly imagine, that I am safe from peril at the very moment when I rashly throw myself upon your mercy ? Misguided woman ! thou art thy own destroyer ! The confidence of virtue leads thee, step after step, to the margin of destruction, and there abandons thee, either a prey to the artifice of others, or the hopeless victim of a disappointed passion.

“ How torturing is the conflict which my soul is destined to endure ! How difficult is the struggle betwixt reason and affection !

“ Why

“Why do I love you? Why do I lean on that bosom for support, which is too feeble to sustain my sinking fortitude? Had you been worthy of my heart, you would not have cheated its affections by the treachery of hope. You would have strengthened the frailty of my nature; you would have been my guide through the wildering mazes of a deceitful world. Ah! my Lord! Ask your own conscious bosom, what has been your conduct?”

“Can I hope to hold that mind’s attachment, which is sceptical even of its own fidelity? which dares not trust its professions of faith, and restrains the graced benignity of candour, lest it should unfold such feelings as caprice would render transient.”

“Dearest Denmore! you have estranged me from all other objects: you have, as it were, enfolded me within your bosom; I court no other asylum; I can derive

vitality has no other home. If I am driven from the sanctuary which is presented by the idol of my soul, I must cease to live: and yet, Would to Heaven I could become an apostate! for every sentiment of my mind, which reason has not deserted, hourly convinces me that my idolatry is criminal; that my punishment will be terrible and certain."

LETTER XIII.

GERTRUDE to FRANCES.

July 28, 1796.

How strange, how incomprehensible is the progress of my destiny! I sleep only to cherish visions which poison my repose; and I awake but to experience a new scene of sorrow.

Lord

Lord Denmore's conduct is replete with mystery. I am inquisitive, fearful, astonished,—and yet bewildered ! Last night I did not retire to my chamber till the clock struck twelve : I had read till I was weary, but my senses were little inclined to rest ; and sleep seemed to have forsaken those eyes, which are now perpetually dimmed with tears.

I entered my chamber where every thing was impressively melancholy. The moon shone through the gothic casements ; and the wind gently moaned along the battlements which surround the Castle. I looked fearfully on every side, and trembled at my own shadow ; a tremour thrilled through my bosom : and the sound of any thing stirring in the spacious apartment would, at that moment, have terrified me to madness.

The chamber was hung with ancient tapestry ; gigantic features on every side
seemed

seemed to frown upon me: my bed looked like a funeral bier; my heart throbbed quick, and my tottering steps feebly bore me towards the door. I opened it; the wide staircase presented itself to my view; again a fearful throbbing smote my heart; but hearing some of the family still in the library, and fancying that a book, which I had been reading but not finished, would divert my mind, I summoned resolution, and descended.

On entering the library, I found Lord Denmore, walking hastily to and fro, and holding a handkerchief to his eyes with evident agitation. I would have retired; but he darted forward, as if awakened from a reverie, and catching my hand, "Gertrude," said he, "what brings you hither? Why do you seek to torture me?" I trembled—and was silent.

"Gertrude,"

"Gertrude," continued Lord Denmore with increased perturbation, "this library is the only place on the habitable globe where I can indulge my soul in the sad luxury of sorrow. Hither I retire, to unburthen my full heart; to talk in fancy with a vision, which is at once my solace and my source of incurable despair! Do you not behold it?"

"What, my Lord?" said I fearfully.

"A pale and beauteous vision!—A murdered angel!"

I trembled, and concluding that his senses were disordered, taking his convulsive arm, led him towards the sofa.

"Depart," said he sternly; "if you value my esteem, depart; hasten to your chamber, and leave me to my selfish sorrow. I am strangely, terribly afflicted! my mind is troubled, almost to frenzy: leave me."

"Not

“Not alone, my Lord,” said I. “Suffer me to inform Lady Denmore that you wish to speak with her.” I was proceeding towards the door, when he exclaimed, “If you do not seek to destroy both yourself and me, be silent.” The deep tone in which he spoke, the wildness of his looks, the quivering of his lips, evinced no common anguish. I could not answer him. The time of night, my depressed spirits, and Lord Denmore’s words, nearly overpowered my senses. I scarcely breathed.

“Leave me, leave me, my beloved Gertrude,” continued Lord Denmore, after a pause of some moments; “for if there be any thing impressivè in the noblest sympathies of nature—ah! Gertrude! you will learn to hate me.”

“Never,

"Never, my Lord! Can I learn to hate the only friend, the only patron of my youth?"—He started—

"Look there!" said he;—I gazed slowly round the apartment, but I saw nothing living, except ourselves. "Oh! let us fly, my Gertrude; let us for ever quit this scene of fatal recollection. In this Castle—" He stopped abruptly. "Go on," said I; "I conjure you to go on."

"In this Castle your mother perished! within these walls, your father, your inhuman father, saw her expire."

"Here, in the Castle?" said I, faintly.

"Here, in this very apartment," replied Lord Denmore, "did she breathe the last sigh from her agonized bosom. Here she conjured me to cherish her poor orphan, to guard her youth, her innocence."

"Had

“Had I no father left?” said I, with emotion scarcely supportable.

“Your father was a villain!”

I sunk upon his arm. He sustained my shivering frame; he pressed my hand to his feverish lips; he bathed it with tears. “Sweet innocent,” said he, “why did I bring you to this infernal habitation? Why did I expose your sensibility to such destructive conflicts? On me your fate depends; I shudder with anticipated horrors! for, I am a wretch, created to be miserable.”

“Why do you indulge so dreadful a presentiment?” said I. “If my presence can disturb your happiness, let me immediately quit the Castle.”

“Were I but assured that you would love me, Gertrude,” replied Lord Denmore; “were I only certain that, at some future moment, you would not reproach

reproach me, I would defy even conscience."

"What do you meditate?" said I, aroused and terrified! I struggled to depart; he held me firmly; at this mysterious moment Lady Denmore entered the library.—I tore myself from the grasp which had detained me, and hastened to my chamber.

Farewel, my friend! I know that your bosom will sympathize in my sorrows, and my confidence shall ever be unbounded.

LETTER XIV.

The Same to the Same.

July 30, 1796.

How shall I unfold the anguish of my heart? how arm my reason against the variety

variety of ills which hasten to overwhelm me? Frances, I am wretched! The dawn of felicity which opened to my view is suddenly involved in gloom, and the storm which gathers round me is fraught with all the powers of desolation.

Lady Denmore has withdrawn herself from the Castle; and for ever relinquished the protection of her husband! Lord Denmore was absent at the moment of her departure; and on me devolved the painful task of revealing that secret, which was destined to wring the most liberal of bosoms.

Oh Frances! what were my sensations, when I beheld the convulsive agitation of his frame, his speaking eyes, his pale and quivering lips, faintly uttering the misery of regret, keen and undissembled.

After some minutes had elapsed, Lord Denmore summoned resolution to address

addresses me. "Gertrude," said he, "how little do you foresee the anguish which awaits you! How painful is the event which compels me to inform you, that your absence from the Castle is absolutely necessary. You must, this night, depart."

"To-night, my Lord!" said I starting; "whither?"

"There lies the difficulty," replied Lord Denmore. "I am perplexed, distracted. But under this roof, while my wife is absent, you cannot remain. Think, devise whither you would wish to go."

"My Lord, I am a stranger to all persons and all places in this country, excepting the Castle and its present inhabitants. These are the only beings with whom I have had the smallest intercourse since I quitted the seclusion in which your bounty placed me from my infancy. If it is your pleasure to
discard

discard me, thither will I return." Lord Denmore walked hastily about the room; then, in a tone of voice scarcely articulate, and abruptly stopping, he replied—"I cannot, indeed, Gertrude, I cannot part with you: my heart is agonized even at the thought of losing your society;" He paused—I had not power to answer him. Again he resumed the conversation.

"You shall remain beneath this roof; you shall not be driven to wander over the earth, a fugitive, dependent on the frowns or smiles of the unfeeling. Here you shall reside; and I will visit you, as often as I dare, with cautious secrecy."

"Pardon me, my Lord," said I, "but on such terms we cannot, must not meet. What have I done that secrecy should be observed? in what respect have I proved myself unworthy of your avowed protection?"

"Sweet Gertrude," replied Lord Denmore, "fear nothing. This Castle shall be your home; you shall command all that I call mine. My establishment shall be yours; and my arms shall be ever open to receive you." He snatched me to his bosom; I threw him from me with anger and amazement.

"O, man! man!" exclaimed Lord Denmore, with vehement agitation; "what an inconsistent being art thou! created to protect those fascinating creatures who tremble while they trust thee." I was alarmed and afflicted: his words seemed almost prophetic. I would have quitted the room, but he held my arm, conjured me to stay and to listen only a few moments longer. "Why do you tremble, Gertrude?" continued Lord Denmore. "Be confident; believe me incapable of deceiving you. This earth presents not an object
half

half so dear to me as yourself: if I dared be more explicit"—

"Have a care, my Lord," said I sternly. "Your language grows equivocal, and I am proudly tenacious of my honour."

"Angelic Gertrude!" exclaimed Lord Denmore; "a time will come when you will repay my fondness."

"Never," said I abruptly. He smiled and shook his head; I reddened with indignation.

"Amiable girl!" said Lord Denmore, "pardon the warmth of my feelings; and forget the unguarded zeal which has distressed you. The purity of your mind, like the sensitive leaf, shrinks at the touch of a too fervid circulation: This mansion must still be your asylum; I promised, while you were an infant, that you should share my fortune,—that I would be your guardian and your friend: So solemn an engagement must
not

not be violated, to gratify the vengeance of a jealous woman." Bursting into tears, and with tottering steps, I proceeded toward the door: my heart was too full, to allow my tongue the power of articulation. At this instant Sir Hector Upas entered the library; and, observing my situation, with wide-stretched eyes, first gazing on me, and then significantly smiling at Lord Denmore, inquired the cause of my uneasiness.—"Why, my precious jewel! what ails you?" said he; "has my Lord affronted you? You seem prodigiously distressed; I would not for the wealth of India be the cause of your spoiling those pretty eyes at such a rate; why you have made them as red as two rubies, while all their brilliancy seems dissolved in tears. Indeed this is prodigiously ridiculous." I could make no reply, but continued sobbing like an infant.

"Lack-a-day!" exclaimed Sir Hector, "this is unlucky! Why, my Lord, I thought you were prodigiously fond of the ladies; how comes it that you have made this little mistake? When I was in India I was idolized by the elegant sex, and I never made a tear fall in the whole course of my life."

"Not even at your departure!" cried Miss Cecil, at that moment joining us. "That you were their idol I doubt not," continued she; "for I have often heard that wealth is zealously worshiped in that part of the globe."

"Well! you are prodigiously severe," replied Sir Hector: "but I can bear the severity of your sex with patience."

"Habit reconciles us to all things," answered Miss Cecil; "and I make no doubt, but you have long been a patient proof of submission to that, which you had not the power to remedy."

"I thank

"I thank you for the compliment," said Lady Upas, who was standing at the library door on the lawn, "though," added her Ladyship, archly, "I still hope, as every evil has its remedy, that time will yet give me my freedom, and Sir Hector—"

"What, madam?" said Lord Denmore, gravely.

"Another wife," replied Lady Upas. "What else could I mean?—I am sure no one knows how much I should rejoice, at seeing him matched as he deserves."

"Perhaps Sir Hector has no inclination to change," said Mr. Treville. "Though there are men," continued he in a low voice, addressing Lady Upas, "who can lose a wife with more *sang froid* than they would shoot a partridge." Lord Denmore soon after rose from the window, where he had been sitting in a pensive attitude, and

F 2

suddenly

suddenly rushed towards the lawn. "That was a severe remark!" said Lady Upas. "It may be christian-like to ridicule the sorrows of a friend, but it bears, notwithstanding, strong marks of barbarity."

"Lady Upas a moralist!" cried Mr. Treville, laughing. "Astonishing!"

"I confess it," said her Ladyship, "when it is remembered how much I have been honoured with your society."

I now observed my guardian walking with hasty steps towards the wood, not an hundred yards from the window. "Pray," interrupted I, "pray, Mr. Treville, go and endeavour to tranquilize Lord Denmore's mind. He is really depressed and afflicted; and nobody seems to sympathize in his feelings." Mr. Treville smiled. Miss Cecil replied. "Who will look at your countenance, and believe the assertion?"

said

said she. "And since you are so strongly induced to pity, you are the properest person to console him."

"He will at least have the consolation of innocence," said Lady Upas. "And in these degenerate times, the boast will almost be singular."

"You are skilled in divination, I presume?" said Mr. Treville, addressing Lady Upas. "Perhaps you have some intercourse with the planets; you can foretell the transit of Venus; pass your days in exploring the orbit of the sun; and your nights in watching the great bear."

"Prodigiously rude!" said Sir Hector.

"A-propos," continued Mr. Treville, "can you tell Sir Hector's fortune?"

"It would be wonderful indeed, if her Ladyship could *tell* that which is *countless*!" said Miss Cecil.—Sir Hector swung his unwieldy form about the library, evidently discontented.

Lord Denmore, on whom my eyes were fixed during this severe *badinage*, now disappeared among the trees; I could no longer restrain my solicitude. If you do not choose to go, Mr. Treville, Lady Upas and I will," said I hesitating.

"Whither, fair monitress?" inquired Mr. Treville, with a supercilious grin.

"Only to the wood; pray do not refuse me."

"With you, I will go to the deserts of Arabia!" sighed Mr. Treville.

"Take his offer, for the benefit of society!" said Miss Cecil.

"Indeed Lord Denmore seems very unhappy," interrupted I.

"No doubt," cried Mr. Treville, "since you are absent."

"This is trifling! I will positively go; for if any thing should happen," said I——

"That

"That will depend upon yourself," cried Mr. Treville, coolly taking his gloves, and drawing them on at leisure.

"Suppose Lord Denmore should be induced to commit any horrible deed?" said I.

"He will be amenable to the laws," rejoined Mr. Treville.

"Yet that is not always the case; is it, Sir Hector?" inquired Miss Cecil.

"You are prodigiously witty!" said the nabob.

I was now quitting the library, when Sir Hector proposed being of our party. "I should be sorry that any evil happened to my Lord," said he, "and should he do any thing rash, I would not have it on my conscience, for the riches of Peru."

"It may be dangerous to press that which is already overlaiden!" cried Miss Cecil.

Sir Hector continued: "'Tis prodigiously strange that young ladies should

choose the most odious subjects for their mirth!"

"How can you laugh at poor Sir Hector?" cried Lady Upas. "A well-bred wit should never be personal."

"You do not comprehend me," added the nabob. "I meant to say, that young ladies never know what they are about."

"So said the world, when you were married to Lady Upas," rejoined Miss Cecil.

"And yet all Sir Hector's male associates considered it as a very promising circumstance," added Mr. Treville.

"You are prodigiously lively," cried the nabob, waxing angry. "But I am not easily put out of countenance."

"Granted," said Miss Cecil; "the true Asiatic bronze will at any time defy the blush of compunction."

"You

"You are severe in your censure," cried Mr. Treville. "But wit loses the power to amuse, when it becomes hostile to good breeding. Neither is it consistent with either justice or philanthropy to stigmatize the many, for the vices of the few."

"My satire is not general," said Miss Cecil. "The subject is very singular, believe me. And I am ready to confess that I know some Asiatics whose bosoms are as warm as their climate, and whose minds are as capacious as their fortunes."

"Name one," cried I, "if only to rescue the soil from the poisons you have ascribed to it."

"Most readily," said she, "for, if in search of feeling, honour, good sense, and good-nature, steadiness of friendship, and benevolence of mind, you would traverse the habitable globe, you will scarcely find one more distinguished for
F 5 those

those qualities, than the liberal Major Bromley."—This panegyric being incontrovertible, the whole party assented.

Seeing Lord Denmore now recrossing the lawn, I availed myself of the dispute, which seemed to ferment by continuance, and escaped to my dressing-room, where I remained till the bell was rung for dinner. The inestimable virtues of my patron seemed shadowed over with a gloom that was indefinable. From the earliest dawn of reason, a veneration, pure as it was instinctive, established his dominion over my mind. I was a perfect idolator: should such a partiality diffuse the flush of shame over my cheek, or fashion in my mind a single chimera that might menace danger?

On the following day I rose early and descended from my chamber.—Tempted by the brilliancy of the morning, I strolled about the grounds till the accustomed hour of breakfast. Absorbed

forbed in meditation, I ventured to the margin of that stream where I was restored to life by the interposition of Lord Denmore. I could scarcely refrain from tears, while I contemplated its foaming course, its gloomy borders, their romantic, rocky seats, the distant view of the castle, and the tower of the village church, just visible above the thick woods which hung over the wild water. The scenery was too touching for a mind deeply and fatally wounded. I quitted the dark spot, and was returning to the Castle when I met Mr. Treville.

He assumed a countenance of surprise at seeing me out so early; and, with no common fervour, congratulated me on the healthful glow which the morning air had diffused over my features. Alas! Frances, a sigh which I could not repel, bespoke the mortal sorrow

with which my soul sickened, at the very moment when I was told that I looked like a divinity.

We continued our path towards the Castle; Mr. Treville spoke of Lady Denmore's conduct with a contemptuous smile: and at the same moment ridiculed the tameness of my spirit in bearing the insult of suspicion. "Though perhaps," said he, "you are so situated in the family, that you have no remedy against the humiliations of dependance." — My pride was wounded, but resentment, for the indelicacy of such a remark, predominated over my chagrin, and I repaid his rudeness with tacit indignation.

"Forgive the suggestion," continued Mr. Treville, observing the colour rush with deepened tints over my cheek; "but regard for your safety would not suffer me to remain silent. This Castle
is

is not a fit sanctuary for the purity of such a fugitive. Lord Denmore is a libertine ; and his wife—”

“ What ?”

“ A woman, to say the least, of most ridiculous conduct,” replied Mr. Treville. “ Indeed I once thought of making her my wife ; but, thank Heaven ! I have some hopes of obtaining the prohibited blessing, without the mortification of paying the penalty.”

“ I am shocked to hear a person of your sacred habit utter so profligate a wish,” said I. “ Neither can I credit the assertion, when I consider your pretensions, and compare them with those of Lord Denmore.”

“ The merit of the person has little to do with the business,” said Mr. Treville. “ It is sufficient for my hopes, that Lord Denmore is her husband.”

I sighed. “ She ought to think herself the happiest of women,” said I.

“ She

"She is one of the most artful," interrupted Mr. Treville. "For even the sagacious Denmore is the dupe of her folly. He believes her immaculate : a husband is generally the last person permitted to know the frailty of his wife, or the ridicule which her capricious conduct casts upon his character."

"Has he no friend to tell him?" said I.

"It is by his friends that he is deceived," answered Mr. Treville ; "and those who profit by his blindness would be fools indeed to render him clear-sighted."

"Why is mankind so practised in dissimulation?" said I, with a shuddering of disgust.

"Because the creature *man* was born to enjoy existence ; and secrecy is the only bond which holds the breathing race together. Besides, Lord Denmore's predicament is by no means singular ;

singular ; excepting that he would, perhaps, bear the conviction of his wife's indifference with less temper than some of his associates."

" I will awaken his senses from the lethargy which benumbs them," said I, with an energetic tone, which bespoke the scepticism of my mind respecting the truth of Mr. Treville's inuendo's. " I cannot, will not behold so generous, so excellent a mortal, the dupe of a false friend, or a capricious woman." Mr. Treville smiled.—" How childishly you talk !" said he. " By such a discovery you would expose yourself to every mortification. Lady Denmore would despise, and her husband would not believe you. This is not all : the world would attribute your interference to another cause ; and Lady Denmore's sudden flight would corroborate the suspicion. If you wish to remain on good terms with society, you must hear, see, and say nothing : the greatest crime you can
commit

commit against Heaven is that of destroying domestic felicity."

"Preposterous!" exclaimed I. "Shall I see my friend betrayed, my patron injured, and yet remain a tacit accomplice in a plot formed to undermine his reputation?"

"Unquestionably," replied Mr. Treville. "If Lord Denmore is too idle to look after his character, he deserves to lose it. Who will take the pains to watch another's reputation, in an age when every man has sufficient to do in maintaining his own? Where will you find a being so disinterested as to guard the treasure of a neighbour, while his own property remains undefended against the villany of a practised robber? There is yet another reason why you should be silent. No man ever thanked a friend for telling him that he was dishonoured. There is something humiliating in the word, which excites disdain, but never awakens gratitude."—By this time we reached the

the Castle, where I embrace a tranquil hour to tell you what I have felt, and what the terrors of my trembling heart still prompt me to anticipate. Adieu, only for a short period. Adieu!

LETTER XV.

The Same to the Same.

August 2, 1796.

As soon as I had sealed my last letter, I joined the breakfast party. On entering the room, Sir Hector, with an obsequious bow, inquired after my health; at the same time informing me, that he was "prodigiously" uneasy all night, lest I should have *worried* myself into a fever. "I would not, for the wealth of Indostan, see those beautiful sapphire eyes again in tears," said he. I thanked him. He continued: "Now, as for
your

your every-day beauties, they may weep till they are blind, and nobody will care about it."

"Your discrimination is equal to your humanity!" said Miss Cecil.

"You may be sarcastic," replied Sir Hector, growing angry; "but there is certainly a something in beauty which is prodigiously interesting. I have been as much flustered at the arrival of a consignment in that article from England, as at the news that a whole race of Ethiops was annihilated."

"That is somewhat singular," said Miss Cecil; "for it is generally understood, that the two events would operate diametrically the reverse on your interests."

"Very true," replied Sir Hector, looking earnestly in my face. "But we must yield, where we are born to be controlled."

"And,

“And, by the same rule, you distress wherever you have power to command,” said Miss Cecil.

“Now you are ill-natured,” interrupted Mr. Treville: “there is nothing so cruel as reminding a man of that which it is the labour of his life to forget.”

“And yet we cannot but remember that which has grown habitual to our natures!” said Miss Cecil; “even though the subject of rumination were ever so detestable. What think you, Lady Upas?”

“I never think on disagreeable subjects,” answered her Ladyship.

“Then probably you did not hear Sir Hector’s observation,” continued Miss Cecil. “He asserts, that he was born to be the slave of beauty: and I declare that he, on the contrary, distresses whoever he has the power to command.”

“That

"That I deny positively," said Lady Upas, with bewitching archness. "For Sir Hector has sovereign power to command me, as his wife, and yet I defy him to cause me a moment's uneasiness."

"How unblushingly immoral!" exclaimed Mr. Treville.

"And yet many husbands would be happy to know, that their wives possessed the same placid indifference," added Miss Cecil. Lord Denmore bowed his head, gravely.

"Well!" sighed Miss Cecil, "I declare that, were I the wife of Sir Hector Upas, he should have fifty mistresses if he thought proper. Nay more, he should never hear the sound of my voice, or even see my face from year to year, except to tell him how perfectly reconciled I was to my situation."

"That is prodigiously malicious," cried Sir Hector.

"Extremely

“Extremely profligate !” added Mr. Treville.

“There is some wit in it, notwithstanding,” said Lord Denmore, half smiling.

“A woman’s wit is like a diamond,” cried Sir Hector; “it shines brightest, when it is on a fair subject.”

“My greatest enemy cannot say that I am ill-natured ; but surely the present was a dark one,” said Miss Cecil : “neither will I allow the truth of Sir Hector’s definition. I pronounce a woman’s wit to be like a nabob’s treasure ; frequently displayed at the expence of humanity.”

“Prodigiously false !” exclaimed Sir Hector. “My expences have nothing to do with humanity.”

“You utter a libel against the justice of Heaven !” said Mr. Treville. “I really shudder at your suggestion ! Can it for a moment be supposed, that the divine Distributor of events would bestow
uncounted

uncounted wealth on one who was insensible to the wants of his fellow-creatures; who consulted no feeling, but that of selfish gratification; who revelled in luxury, while the modest and the enlightened starved? Impossible! I dare swear that Sir Hector is the promoter of the arts, the patron of the Muses, the lover of human kind, the pride of science, and the delight of society! that he will build hospitals to receive the poor, and churches to reform the profligate; that he will set an example for piety, meekness, and philanthropy, which shall rival a Howard or a Hanway! display the wit of a Sheridan, the generosity of a Hertford, and the virtues of Northumberland; that he will rival Fox in the Senate, Thurlow in the Cabinet, and Moira in the field. In short, that he will be the greatest and most illustrious character in any past, present, or future century."

"That

“That he will make a good husband, and see his children’s children spreading like olive branches round his table!” added Miss Cecil.—Here the whole circle burst into a convulsive fit of laughter. Lady Upas wondered at Miss Cecil’s improbable prophecy, and Sir Hector blushed deep yellow, to the no small astonishment of the company; while Miss Cecil, perfectly satisfied with her epilogue to Mr. Treville’s ironical farce, took her seat at Lady Denmore’s harp, and began a lively air, with all the dignity of conscious importance.

Sir Hector, after a pause of some minutes, during which he appeared to be listening to the harp, but was in reality renovating his spirits, which were considerably deranged by the fallies he had received from every quarter; after coughing, hemming, and endeavouring

to

to bow the uncouth rotundity of his figure with affected humility, he inquired of me, whether I could play on any instrument? "I am prodigious fond of music," said Sir Hector.

"One would suppose that Miss Cecil had destroyed the harmony of your mind," said Mr. Treville: "she has a most happy talent at playing upon feelings." Sir Hector pretended deafness, and again addressed me.

"I should think that music would produce a prodigious fine effect from such beautiful hands as yours!" said he: "and I should like vastly to hear you sing a hunting song or a drinking song——"

"Or a song of your great prototype, Solomon?" interrupted Miss Cecil.

"Prodigiously vulgar!" exclaimed Sir Hector. "But I know you are only joking; for a young lady of such genteel

genteel manners as Miss St. Leger cannot be acquainted with things that are now only known to the riff-raff."

Mr. Treville affected to shudder. "I really cannot stay in the room, if you utter such profane sentiments," said he: "for the unthinking mortal who dares ridicule the sanctity of religion, undermines the foundation of every earthly happiness."

"I allow the truth of the assertion, though I doubt the sincerity of the speaker," said Lady Upas. "But it is your task to inculcate, and your hearer's to exemplify. Hence we behold the sable garb too often covering the hypocrite; and the smooth balm of pious eloquence passing over the lip that is contaminated by falsehood."—Mr. Treville coloured, and was silent. Sir Hector resumed his discourse.

"When I was in India, I used to have fifty little black wenches every day

to sing me asleep after dinner; and I used to make them fan me with heron's feathers, and sprinkle my couch with otto of roses: 'twas prodigiously delightful!"

"It must have been luxurious indeed," said Miss Cecil, "and attended with no inconsiderable expence."

"A trifle, a mere trifle," replied Sir Hector: "we send a dozen black vagabonds up to Persia for our essences, and it is bad luck indeed, if out of twelve four does not return with his commission."

"And what becomes of the other eight?" said I, earnestly.

"Why, the climate sometimes kills them," answered Sir Hector. "But they were created for our use, therefore we never care what becomes of them: there's plenty to be found; they overrun the country as thick as blackberries."

"Therefore

"Therefore you scatter thorns to complete the vegetation," said Miss Cecil.

"We have not such sweet flowers as I now see before me, to be sure!" cried Sir Hector: "neither do we suffer nettles to bloom, that they may sting us."

"That would be useless," retorted Miss Cecil. "Nature has implanted a more potent assailant, in the mind—a thriving, stinging, wounding thorn, called Conscience; a powerful instrument of terror and compunction,—another black associate, that will not be lulled to sleep by all the strains of harmony, or all the perfumes of Arabia."

"Prodigiously poetical!" interrupted Sir Hector, while his face lost one shade of its saffron hue, and his smile assumed a ghastly contempt.

"Nay, never fear," continued Miss Cecil: "*it touches not us, we that have free souls.* The virtue and huma-

nity of your mind sets slander at defiance. Born in the sphere of honest industry, you never plunged into the vortex of dissipation, till you were too old to be contaminated."

"There you are mistaken," replied Sir Hector. "I was in the prime of my youth, when I quitted this vulgar climate, for the luxurious regions of the East; and since that period I have *lived*, as I may say, while you have only vegetated."

"The more is the pity!" sighed Miss Cecil.

"The world was made for my gratification," continued Sir Hector: "you islanders know nothing of the luxuries of life: you never feast on peacocks, travel on palanquins, bathe in perfumes, drive an hundred slaves before you to sprinkle your paths with odoriferous waters, or walk on leaves of flowers gathered beneath a sun that shines with
partial

partial light upon our eastern paradise."

"A most considerate fun!", replied Miss Cecil, "kindly to diffuse its beams on the only paradise you have any chance of enjoying. What a pity it is that all who bask in its radiance do not catch the glow of generosity which it so partially bestows."

"There again you are prodigiously in error!" said Sir Hector. "No set of men are more generous than we props of the eastern world: look at the treasures we have transported from the mines of Asia; the stars that dazzle in the highest spheres! the blazing constellations, which, but for our industry, would still lie buried in the mines of our terrestrial Elysium! we teach them to shine forth, to illumine—"

"The dark paths of injustice," interrupted Miss Cecil; "to dazzle the eyes of

scruti-

scrutinizing pity, and to pave the path that leads to the Lethean fountain."

"You are prodigiously knowing, indeed, Miss," cried Sir Hector: "though I cannot say but you are rather ungenteel in your observations. But I can forgive any thing that is only said in joke; and I know you are too polite to be sincere."

"A fair remark," cried Lord Denmore. "I perceive, Sir Hector, that you can parry your adversaries thrust with the skill of an amateur."

"Sir Hector has a shield that is impenetrable," replied Miss Cecil. "Even the shaft of ridicule cannot pierce through adamant."

"Prodigiously impertinent!" muttered Sir Hector. Lady Upas smiled; and perceiving that the debate grew warm, proposed a drive in the sociable. I made my excuses, and escaped from

the trifling group, to meditate on the prospect which my fate presented, and to lament that I was ever removed from the solitude of peace to the busy, the perplexing regions of folly and deception!—Adieu.

LETTER XVI.

The Same to the Same.

August 3, 1796.

I HAD not been long in my apartment, when I was interrupted by a female servant, who delivered to me a small packet, and immediately retired. With eager haste I broke the seals which fastened the envelope, and found that it contained a short note, and a brilliant, which appeared to be of considerable

a 4

value.

value. The conviction instantly struck upon my mind, that they both came from Sir Hector; and with no small perturbation, blended with scorn, I read :

“ Beautiful Creature !

“ I SEND you a paltry bit of earth, as a pledge of my esteem; and you will prodigiously oblige your devoted admirer by suffering the poor dumb gift to speak the vivid and glowing idolatry of the giver. Enchanting creature ! idol of my soul ! more sweet than all the perfumes of the East ! more beautiful than the burning sky that draws them forth ! I am the slave of your brilliance ; and unless you smile upon me, like the broad effulgent sun on the tawny plains of Indostan, I shall be the despairing victim of its lustre !

“ It is not meet that a son of the eastern world should implore your pity.
He

He admires, he hopes; that is the extent of his condescension. Quit this state of limited enjoyment, and become the matchless idol of your enchanted Hector. You shall be attended with all the magnificence of an eastern princess; you shall be adorned with the gems of our superior world; you shall bathe in the rich dews of Arabia, and sleep on the aromatic flowerets of its ambrosial vallies! For all these luxuries I only ask you to be secret; and if you bless me with the smiling radiance of those ruby lips, I shall wish for no other paradise,—here or hereafter!

“HECTOR.

“N. B. You may trust my fellow, Scamper, who is my secretary, and writes all my letters of importance. He will wait for your answer, at the dusk of evening, in the recess near the root bridge.

"Once more, idol of my soul! remember the ardent and adoring

"HECTOR."

At the conclusion of the letter, I knew not whether to smile or to be angry: the affected bombast which met my eyes appeared so completely ludicrous, that I had scarcely the power to resent his folly. My regard for the repose of Lady Upas would have induced me to resolve on keeping the proposal a secret, had I not been assured that no jealous pang could wring her bosom. I therefore set all my imagination at work, to devise the means of humbling and alarming Sir Hector, and of exposing the folly which induced him to insult me.

After writing a ceremonious answer, declining the honour he intended to confer on me, I carefully re-sealed the *billet d'amour*, and enclosing it with
the

the diamond in a fresh paper, directed it for Miss Cecil: the packet I resolved to place upon her toilet before she dressed for dinner; and the letter I determined to convey, at the appointed hour, to the trusty Scamper.

Thus calmly decided, and pleased more than pained by the opportunity of exposing vice, which only acquired effrontery from ignorance, I prepared for dinner. Lord Denmore, having letters of importance to write, and being slightly indisposed, made his excuses; while I, at his request, undertook the task of officiating at table.

On entering the saloon, I observed a conscious and triumphant smile on the cheek of Miss Cecil, who waited, with evident impatience, for the appearance of Sir Hector. Lady Upas and Mr. Treville, who were the only persons not entrusted with a part in this interesting comedy, complimented Miss Cecil

on her engaging vivacity, which at that moment wore a complexion even more *piquante* than usual. After some minutes had elapsed, the condescending Hector made his *entré*; his head erect, his air commanding, his dress more than commonly splendid, and his countenance rendered doubly ridiculous by the ardent glances which he perpetually directed towards the upper end of the table. On my right hand sat Lady Upas; on my left Miss Cecil. Sir Hector looked like the conqueror of the world; his cheek glowed like the bronze of antiquity; and his voice assumed the lofty tone of an eastern despot. I confess I felt pleasure that was exquisite, while I anticipated the *denouement* of the pantomime, where the gaudy scenes of luxurious hope would be suddenly changed to the darkest regions of despair.

Time never appeared to move so tardily as from the hour of dinner to the

the close of twilight. Every moment seemed insupportably tedious, and every object tiresomely obtrusive. During the desert, Sir Hector was earnestly attentive;—to me, by inclination; and to Lady Upas, and Miss Cecil, with the hope that he should render them blind to the motive of his conduct. Thus, each thought herself the exclusive object of idolatry: but the effects were wholly opposite. Lady Upas seemed to sicken with disgust; while her lively friend evinced, by the flush upon her cheek, the triumph of secret exultation.

At last the important hour arrived. The gloom of evening was rendered doubly obscure by the thick woods nearly encircling the recess which love had chosen for the humiliation of folly. I anxiously longed to know what plan of exposure Miss Cecil meant to adopt; but Prudence chained my tongue, lest I should discover the deception which
led

led to an event of so much importance to my feelings, and so absolutely necessary to appease the resentment which they roused into existence. I felt a strong indignant propensity to unveil the hypocrite, whose odious vanity assumed the mask of gallantry; and whose arrogance, originating in the pride of wealth, had dared insult the poverty of a defenceless woman. I considered Sir Hector as a rank weed, sprung from the hotbed of oppression, and spreading its contagious influence over the humble flowers of Nature's fairest garden.—I could have blessed the hand that crushed the vegetating poison; the rank, contaminating *Upas*, which, like the tree of Java, had risen amidst the horrors of its desolating power. I speak not from prejudice: Heaven shield my heart from its deceptive influence! I have received the indelible impression of disgust, which
arms

arms my mind to oppose this gilded caitiff, from the character which I heard pronounced by Lord Denmore, who gives to his portrait every attribute that might belong to the most infernal nature; insolence and folly—ignorance and pride—meanness and rapacity—vice and hypocrisy—each struggling with the other for pre-eminence, in a mind enervated by the agonies of conscious guilt, and rendered, by turns, the slave of each propensity.

Just as the clock struck nine, I set out for the recess, where I was to deliver my answer to the confidential Scamper, who was at once the parasite and amanuensis of his vicious employer. The spirit of resentment, and the confidence of success in my plan, made me fearless of danger. I wandered near half an hour beside the stream, and frequently entered the recess to listen for the plenipo of mischief. At a moment when my
patience

patience was nearly exhausted, I discovered, by the dusky light, some one approaching. I observed, by the sylph-like form, that it was Lady Upas, who, I concluded, had seen me strolling towards the wood, and came to join me. Convinced that her presence would instantly develop our plot to the sagacious Scamper, I hastily, and unperceived, retired behind the recess, and listened as she approached me. I heard her frequently call my name, and at length seat herself on the rude bench, behind which a screen of rugged stone hid me from her view, while I found a place of secure concealment.

Never did my heart palpitate more violently than at this moment of important solicitude. The darkness was now nearly that of night, excepting where the moon rendered the noisy brook visible from among the opening trees. Lady Upas sometimes sighed deeply,

at

at others attempted to sing a melancholy air, and then as suddenly relapsed into silent meditation. Thus passed near twenty minutes, when a second bat of twilight hovered near our romantic seclusion; one, of the most unwieldy form, whose fang-armed wings had many a time wounded the placid face of Nature. I listened, and heard the impatient Sir Hector calling to his faithful Scamper: "Is she here?—Will she come?" Sir Hector entered the recess: "Divine creature!" said he, addressing Lady Upas, "this is prodigious kind. How ardently have I sighed for this delicious moment!—My chaise is ready; let us avail ourselves of this ecstatic hour, and fly to happier regions. Refuse me not, enchanting Gertrude! All the splendours of the eastern globe await you: accept them, angelic creature! and learn, under my protection, to scorn
the

the reproaches of the world." Lady Upas was silent. I heard Sir Hector lead her from the recess, and at some distance the voice of Lord Denmore, through the thick woods, summoning us to supper.

My guardian continued to approach the place of my concealment, as Sir Hector and Lady Upas hastened towards the chaise, which was in waiting near a private gate not far distant. I heard them drive off; and at the same time my listening ear enabled me to count Lord Denmore's footsteps till he passed the bridge, and was within a few paces of the recess. I scarcely breathed—I trembled. I was on the point of rushing from my concealment, and discovering the whole affair, when Lord Denmore entered the wood on the left hand, and was soon out of hearing.

Once

Once more left to escape, I stole from the dark nook, and flew towards the bridge, which I had scarcely passed, when I was accosted by Mr. Treville.

"My charming Emma," said he, mistaking me for Miss Cecil, "whither have you been wandering? Have you seen the happy, envied Sir Hector." I made no answer.

"Pshaw! this is nonsensical mystery," continued he: "you are not aware of the inattention you have been guilty of. Here is a paper which I found in the saloon not an hour since; its contents shall be sacred with me; though every vein in my heart is tortured by the conviction of having such a rival."

I now found that Sir Hector's letter, which I had directed to Miss Cecil, had been dropped by her, and found by Mr. Treville. I endeavoured to pass him; but he held me with both hands

fast

fast in his, and every effort on my part proved ineffectual. I shrieked.

While I was struggling for liberty, Lord Denmore returned. Mr. Treville quitted me, and with sarcastic severity wished me all the pleasure which conscience would permit me to enjoy, while Fancy presented the injured form of Lady Denmore. I was distressed and mortified. I could with pleasure have leaped into the stream, and ended the scene of humiliation for ever.

Lord Denmore approached me. "Wandering so late, Gertrude!" said he. "Is your mind so contemplative, that you are unconscious of the danger which awaits you?" — "Under your protection I cannot but be safe, my Lord," said I, with an agitated voice.

"Have you seen Sir Hector?" continued Lord Denmore gravely. I hesitated. He proceeded.

"Gertrude,

“Gertrude, I expect a candid answer. I am interested in the question, more interested than you are aware of. I thought your mind pure and immaculate: I hoped that your conduct would be blameless.” His voice was scarcely articulate; he seemed deeply affected, and ceased speaking for several moments. We walked side by side towards the Castle, silent and slowly: when we came near the portico, he again addressed me.

“My friend Mr. Treville, pitying your inexperienced youth, and dreading the artifice of Sir Hector Upas, discovered to me the events of this evening. I did not attribute less vice to the mind of your seducer; but I never suspected you of weakness, that might be duped by such a villain. It is true, the letter which Mr. Treville found was directed to Miss Cecil. But the writing was
yours.

yours. Thus, Gertrude, have you added artifice to folly, by listening to an abandoned libertine, and at the same time endeavouring to tarnish the reputation of an innocent person." I burst into tears. He continued:—"As far as you are concerned, I shall be silent; you I shall not reproach; your own error will produce its punishment: but Sir Hector shall be taught to know, that under my roof, the honour of my guest should have been sacred." We entered the saloon, where we found Mr. Treville and Miss Cecil, laughing heartily at Sir Hector's disappointment, and repeating the whole of the conversation which had passed in the recess, to which, by appointment, they had repaired, and where they had, under covert of the wood, heard all that he said during the evening.

It

It was by this means Miss Ceeil discovered that the letter was intended for me, Sir Hector mentioning my name, when he addressed Lady Upas. Rage, mortified vanity, resentment, and the spirit of retaliation, now made her complain to Lord Denmore of what she termed my artful conduct; declaring that she believed, most sincerely, I had an intrigue with Sir Hector, and threw the letter which he had written to me in her way, for the purpose of concealing my own iniquity.

With this idea she begged leave to quit the Castle; and though it was near midnight, she ordered her chaise, to depart. The servant who had delivered Sir Hector's packet to me denied the circumstance; and I was left to bear a load of calumny, from which neither my most solemn assurances, nor Lord Denmore's usual penetration, could acquit me. Shortly after midnight

Miss

Miss Cecil departed. Mr. Treville begged permission to attend her to town; and I was left, overwhelmed with sorrow, to bear the agonizing reproaches of Lord Denmore.—Adieu.

LETTER XVII.

The Same to the Same.

August 6, 1796.

I HAVE not seen my guardian since the night before last. He has forbid me to present myself near him, until I can exonerate my name from the imputation cast upon it by the machinations of Miss Cecil. The servant who delivered Sir Hector's letter still persists in denying the circumstance, though I have by tears and intreaties endeavoured to awaken

awaken that truth which will acquit me of any criminal intention. Alas, Frances! how do we deceive ourselves, when we hope that the smallest advantage can be derived even from the most innocent deception! How beautiful is sincerity, though it displays our failings, and how useless is the veil of hypocrisy, where we wish to blind the discriminating eye of Reason!

I have written to Lord Denmore, confessing that the letter was originally designed for me, and directed by my hand for Miss Cecil. I pleaded the resentment which I felt, and the pleasure which I anticipated, in the hope of humbling the vanity, and exposing the folly, which had tempted Sir Hector to make such a proposal. Heaven can bear witness, that I meditated no evil towards Miss Cecil, though I hoped for considerable gratification from her wit and vivacity.

We have received no intelligence respecting Lady Denmore. The proud heart of the husband whom she has deserted will neither suffer him to complain, nor to pursue her. Sir Hector and Lady Upas will, most probably, continue their journey together: the shame which he cannot but feel, and the resentment which his conduct has naturally excited in her bosom, will prevent an *éclat* that would expose both parties to that ridicule, 'which scarce the firm philosopher can scorn,' and which the trifling beings of the creation tremble to encounter. Indeed, I have already observed, that the dread of sarcasm is more frequently productive of moral propriety, than even the pride of conscious rectitude. Every thing, in the busy scene of life, derives its consequence or its disgrace from outward appearances. Can we, therefore, be surprised, that to seem what we are not, and to assume those

those virtues which we cannot feel, constitute the perpetual task of those who would bask in the dazzling, sunny beams of fortune?

I am already weary of the world, and all those intricacies, by its misguided inhabitants falsely named enjoyments. I see little to attach in the swift *routine* of pleasure; and I experience still less delight in the society of the unthinking. Who has given me this dislike for what others would approve, and who has taught me to condemn, nay even to abhor, the gay and splendid scenery of this wide theatre, the world? Who, but Lord Denmore? He who performs a part, where virtue is the predominating characteristic; where wisdom tears the mask from the specious face of folly, and the mind dwells with rapture on the lesson which experience teaches! You will say that Sir Hector Upas, Miss Cecil, and Mr. Treville, are but unfavourable

vourable samples of the human race. I acknowledge the truth of such a suggestion. But have I not drawn some inference from the precepts of a superior master? Has he not taught me to analyze the human heart; to separate the dross of folly from the pure and solid ore of truth? Have I not explored the path of virtue and philosophy, guided by his classic taste, and enlightened by the power of his intellectual pre-eminence? It is true, I have till lately been a stranger to the world; I knew not its vices, I feared not the perils it presented. But since the short period of my initiation, I have travelled through an infinity of time: I have, as it were, lived over past ages; examined the customs, and shuddered at the enormities of different eras. I have traced the star of knowledge from the dark horizon, when ignorance obscured mankind. I have seen it illumine the atmosphere of the universe,

universe, at the same moment that it cherished crimes the most atrocious. I have been wrapt in pleasing dreams, and I awake a new-created being.

To-morrow I will write again: till then, adieu.

LETTER XVIII.

The Same to the Same.

August 7, 1796.

THIS morning Lord Denmore set out for London, without even bidding me farewell! I was not awake when he departed; and he commanded the servants on no account whatever to disturb me. The female, whose obstinate denial of having delivered Sir Hector's letter occasioned me to suffer so much pain, informs me that, urged by com-

H 3 punction

punction and pity for my situation, she last night confessed the fact to Lord Denmore. His emotion she describes as the most poignant, though it was blended with joy, to know that I was innocent. I have blessed that sacred, that omnipotent monitor, Truth, whose silent whisperings have awakened justice. I once more hope—ah! Frances, may I avow that I hope to live in the affections of Lord Denmore.

On descending from my chamber, I found breakfast prepared, as usual, in the library; the establishment in the Castle undiminished, and every individual zealous to obey me. Still I was unhappy: I sighed, ah! Frances! I sighed for the presence of Lord Denmore; while every object seemed to wear a gloomy aspect, and every scene looked sad, as if mourning for his absence.

In

In the library stood a bust of Lord Denmore. I gazed on it with a mixture of melancholy and regret, that chilled every fibre of my brain. I began to prepare my breakfast; still my eyes were bent upon the senseless marble; and still the wound of sorrow ached within my bosom.

I lingered through the day in silent rumination. Fancy re-trod the path through which destiny had led me, and every mazy turn seemed more than usually mournful. I met, in memory, all the ills that I had encountered; and beheld, in a distant indistinct perspective, many newly-created sorrows. The despondency of a proud mind, struggling with dependence, and exposed to the hard usage of an unfeeling world, cannot be described. It must be experienced, to be known; and wretched is that mortal whose bosom is destined to

acquire its knowledge from experimental misery.

Would to God! that I had never known Lord Denmore, or his home as my asylum. There is something awfully prophetic in the wish; and I cannot shake it from my heart, either by the force of thought, or the energy of reason. Yet some secret, some instinctive power informs me, that in this solitude I am destined to perish! in youth to perish! I must pause a moment.

An icy languor arrests the circulation in my veins; the bust of Lord Denmore appears to look sternly at me. It seems to possess the powers of the basilisk; I am frequently fascinated by its magic, and feel as if it had something destructive in its influence over my senses. How pliant is the human mind, when superstition rules it! How unaccountably are we under the controul of passions,

passions, at which reflection is taught to shudder !

I quit my pen for a short period. The evening closes; what terrifying phantoms approach me at this gloomy moment ! The features of Lord Denmore's bust are scarcely visible ; every conversation that has passed in this apartment seems imprinted on my memory in fateful characters. Here my mother perished ! On this spot did she " breathe the last sigh from her agonized bosom !" Such were Lord Denmore's words.

I close my letter till to-morrow. I am overwhelmed with a melancholy presentiment, which seems to check my pen. Oh ! spirits of my departed parents ! is it thus your wretched offspring lingers through a scene of torture, which even your intercessions cannot mitigate !—Adieu.

(In continuation.)

August 8, 1796.

Half past three o'clock.

I RISE from my pillow, depressed and feverish. I have slumbered,—I have dreamed—dreamed of Lord Denmore, of his wife, of my dear dead parents! My heart palpitates, and my pulses beat more rapidly than usual. I am startled by the sound of my own footsteps as I cross my chamber. The dawn is gloomy and tempestuous: the strong towers of the Castle tremble as the thunder rolls over them; the lightning glares through my apartment; and the lamp, which aids me with a glimmering flame, is every moment rendered invisible, by the vivid flashes. Something strikes the casement.

All has been silent many minutes; it was the raven's wing, mastered by
the

strong blast, which flapped against my window. How weak is superstition!—and yet it can subdue the strength of reason!

What can these burning tears, this feverish brain, portend? I am unconscious of their meaning, and still they are the source of agony unutterable. How many steal along the vale of life, and drop into a lonely grave, without one mental pang to intercept their journey. Are such beings less guilty than myself? Oh God! thou knowest my heart! and thou art the dispenser of mercy! If I am innocent, thou wilt not let me suffer.

Frances, I sink beneath the weight of sorrow; and I have no friend near me to participate its pressure. I hourly contemplate the portrait of my father; it is never separated from my bosom: the senseless lineaments of that countenance, in which I should have read the language

of parental fondness, are often bathed with tears that dim the crystal: I kiss them off, and bless the inventive powers which formed a transparent safeguard between my sorrow and the object which awakened it; else how long since would the dear resemblance have been effaced for ever!

I trust that I shall hear from Lord Denmore; it would be barbarous wholly to forget me. I have been exonerated from the stigma cast upon me by Miss Cecil; and it is neither just nor humane, to place the badge of criminality on the bosom of acquitted innocence. Yet, (shame on the authorized oppression!) such violations of Nature's rights have been perpetrated,—even in a Christian country!

My situation is too uncertain to be happy; and too romantic to be permanent. What can it mean? why am I left in this magnificent abode? why

treated as its mistress; respected, served, obeyed? What claim have I upon Lord Denmore's bounty? A promise pledged to my dear lost parents. Why was that promise made? and wherefore does the observance of it excite such a variety of strong and agonizing emotions in the breast of him who made it? I am wild, and tortured by perpetual conjectures; the uncertainty of my fate, the mystery of past events, the gloomy prospect which my unsettled imagination presents, and the melancholy seclusion in which I am placed to nurse my sickening fancy, will madden my disordered brain; and, by the worst of mortal miseries, efface the sense of every other. I will not ruminate;—and yet, to live in ignorance is more painful, than even to perish, by persevering in inquiry.—What a scene of solicitude is human life! We are perpetually buoyed up by hope, and menaced by despair. We look
not

not to the means we possess for consolation and enjoyment; but, estimating our lot by comparison with that of those who are highly favoured by Heaven, we consider ourselves wretched; while the more unfortunate envy us those blessings which we have scarcely gratitude to acknowledge.—Oh, mortals! what are your aims, and where will your insatiable longings after that which Fate denies, begin to own the dominion of reason? When will the happy be content, the unfortunate be patient?—Never! Man is a restless, busy, enterprising creature; he is vain of power; ambitious of fame; prone to controversy; warmed by ambition; and mad in the pursuit of pleasure. Woman, created to be his solace and his companion, is, — ah, Frances! my throbbing bosom tells me, that she is formed to be his slave! Her vaunted strength is but the shadow of a giant. She moves in the still
gloom

gloom of life, and fancies herself omnipotent; till the tyrannic passions burst forth round her; she then changes into a visionary being, dazzles for a time,—sports in the sunny hour of youth and joy, till the warm noon of life is past, and the approaching gloom of solitary twilight thickens round her grave!

A chilling languor seems to assail my senses. I will once more endeavour to close my weary eyes;—Heaven shield me! that I may dream no more of beings whom I am never destined to behold; or of one—whom I shall never meet, but with the most poignant anguish.

I must not enter upon this subject; I am sadly, deeply impressed with my past dream,—and wish to rest more tranquilly.

(In continuation.)

Nine o'clock.

OH, Frances ! how vainly does the lacerated bosom hope for consolation in the delight of calm and healing slumber ! How seldom does the cool balm of reason temper my feverish brain !

I shall remain this day in my chamber. I dare not visit the library ; I have not courage to contemplate the inanimate likeness of Lord Denmore. I have often thought, that the chissel gives the resemblance of nature with a ghastly similitude. It is too near reality to please the pensive mind : for, when the immortal essence, the freed soul, escapes from its imprisoning clay, in what does the senseless clod differ from the sculptured marble ? except, that the one is destined rapidly to perish ;
the

the other, to brave the touch of time, and remain beautiful for ages !

This likeness of Lord Denmore, which I have so frequently mentioned, has a cast of character terribly striking. I have gazed on it till I have shuddered; even when I fancied I was happy. What my sensations would now be, Heaven only knows ! I dare not put them to the trial.

From the Castle turrets I often behold an extent of landscape, at once diversified and fertile. The glow of autumn gives lustre to every scene, and animation to every object. Shall the vegetating world combat and overpower a tempestuous season ; shall the herbage, the vallies, the woodlands, shake off their benumbing spell ; and shall this heart of mine, this feeling, aching heart, writhe in perpetual storms ; shudder at the past, and tremble at the future ? Shall I never know the tranquil summer
hour

hour of rest; the lustrous morning of vivifying hope; the calm and harmonising hour of conscious peace? Why, why am I condemned to buffet with the rude storm;—to shrink from the strong giant, persecution;—and to freeze with horror even at the chimeras of a troubled fancy? If the inanimate works of nature are alone allowed the powers of renovation; if nothing, but the senseless part of the creation, is to have its season of delight,—why is virtue, why is sensibility ordained to be the object and effect of superior organization? Weak must that mortal be, who would dedicate his spring of life to the cultivation of an herb or flower, which the winter storm would doom *eternally* to perish.

The sun has risen, and the whole scene before me assumes a new and cheerful aspect! The distant hills bordering the horizon, the vallies, the
woodland

woodland glens, and the lengthening level plains, all seem to breathe fresh perfumes, sprinkled on them during the repose of nature. I have slumbered;—I have sought the oblivious balm, which should attend the soothing hour of sleep; but I awake, sad, and subdued by sorrow.

The birds hover round the Castle towers. They sing, they seem to pour their wild warbled songs for me. Ah, Frances! they are now my only companions; at least the only ones that seek to solace me.

I have received no letter from Lord Denmore! He too has forgot both Gertrude and her sorrows! I dread the malevolence of Miss Cecil; the calumny of Sir Hector; the credulity of my guardian; and, more than all, my own want of resolution to bear his reproaches.—Farewell!—Farewell!

LETTER XIX.

The Same to the Same.

Morning; August 12, 1796.

WHY do I never close my eyes, but to dream of Lord Denmore? Why do I utter involuntary words, such as I was accustomed to speak when he was my companion? He used to say that I looked well when dressed with simple negligence; I am now studiously careful to avoid every thing gaudy or precise: yet why should I take such pains to adopt the taste of one who is not near to see and to approve it? I look at myself; I am satisfied with my own form, because that form, so decorated, would have been pleasing to Lord Denmore.

I have desired a servant to remove the bust, whose stern features never failed to
fill

fill my mind with unaccountable horrors, and I now visit the library almost every hour. Yet the niche looks like an empty casket, from which a valued jewel has been taken. To supply the gloomy vacuum, I shall place there a head of Newton; and as I contemplate a countenance which shews the index of the mind, I shall traverse with him, in fancy, the paths of unknown worlds. With the image of Lord Denmore before me, I never soared above mortality.

The companion of my guardian's bust, is a Sappho. Nothing can be more fascinating: it has softness, blended with strong intellectual traits, and, though not regularly beautiful, is irresistibly pleasing. The Grecian poetess, Lord Denmore informs me, was not famed for personal attractions; she was, like many children of genius, equally distinguished for the gifts of mental pre-eminence, and the persecutions of misfortune;

fortune; she was, at once, the most favoured and the most unhappy of women.

Why, Frances, do we perpetually behold the most enlightened of the human race struggling with poverty or vanquished by despair? Do the attributes of Nature excite such envy in the mind, that those who are not graced with the stamp of powerful intellect must hate what they cannot exemplify? I have wept when I have read the progress of that fate which has followed some of the most distinguished among mortals; I have, notwithstanding, considered them as indebted to Heaven for superior dignities, which poverty cannot debase, and which time will record to an admiring posterity. The gifts of Fortune follow not their possessors when the tomb closes on them; but the favours of Nature, the fruits of Genius, bloom over the grave, and live, even in the remotest

remotest glooms of Time, unperishable.

It is strange that I have not received a line from any individual of the family. I am too insignificant a being, to excite a lasting resentment in the breast of Lady Denmore; she knows, she feels her power over her husband's mind; and that he will scarcely hazard the reproaches of the world, by espousing the cause of an ill-fated orphan. Yet, *he* is generous; and, alas! Frances, I am unhappy.

The sombre habit which my fancy has adopted, and which will never fail to be my most prevailing characteristic, hourly assumes a deeper shade; I am devoted to melancholy,—I am wholly occupied in cherishing the influence it possesses. I gaze around me, but all is tinged with the sadness of increasing despondency. I know but one being in the habitable globe to whom I can
look

look up for protection; and I tremble, while I hope that he will not forsake me. I reproach myself for remaining here under suspicions of a dishonourable nature; and yet I have not resolution to depart,—a secret impulse chains me to this asylum;—this *last asylum*! I feel that my disastrous journey will soon end; I look not forward to months and years of pain or pleasure: my weary eyes behold the close of that perspective, where, amidst the solitary gloom, I behold the shadows of my parents. Oh, my father! my lost, brave, generous father! the hour of battle which gave thy daring bosom to an honourable grave, consigned thy infant Gertrude to that fate, which will teach her to bathe thy ashes with unavailing tears! The breath of calumny cannot tarnish thy fame;—I have heard thee pronounced a villain! I shudder! I should hate thy slanderer; but how seldom can the heart
of

of woman oppose the strength of resentment, against the fascinations of destiny. I was born to be the dupe of my affections;—I struggle, but in vain, to master their omnipotence.

Evening.

I HAVE been reading some anecdotes of the Grecian Sappho. She loved—she was deserted—she was the victim of an hopeless passion! I have passed a whole hour before her likeness. I have given a tear to the memory of her sorrows.

How powerfully has sympathetic pity seized on my imagination! I quitted the library, and wandered towards that part of the woods, where the wild cascade rushes from the over-hanging cliff, and roars in a rapid river, along the distant valley. As I stopped and listened, while the liquid column broke on the rugged base, I fancied that the

harp of the unhappy Lesbian mingled its mournful tones with the deafening din, and gave to the loud thunder of the swift falling waters a pleasing, melancholy sound! I recollected that *she* buried her burning bosom in the deep wave. I beheld the scene before me, and shivered with involuntary horror!

I often, from my chamber window, contemplate the spot where I shall rest for ever! The church-yard nearest the Castle stands on a verdant upland, and sufficiently adjacent for me to discern every object that ascends the consecrated path. I can number the memorials scattered among the heaps of mould, and particularly the monument of the Denmore family. Sometimes the marble entrance seems to yawn; I feel the blood curdle at my heart, and hastily close the shutter of my window; twice I have changed my apartment, and twice returned to it, merely

merely for the gratification of beholding that silent resting place, where, before another summer wastes its prime, I shall, like its leaves, wither and be forgotten!

Weary, sad, and hopeless, I bid you a short farewell.

LETTER XX.

The Same to the Same.

Denmore Castle, August 15, 1796.

AN express has this instant reached the Castle, with intelligence that Lady Denmore is dying! She has swallowed poison, and her situation is hopeless. I fly to implore her pardon; to exculpate myself from every shadow of suspicion; and to breathe forth the

anguish of my soul on the pillow of the expiring victim.

I know not whether Lord Denmore is apprized of this event. The dreadful news was sent to me by Mr. Treville. If Lady Denmore dies, and I am accessory to her destruction, how, oh, Frances! how am I to support the anguish of reflection? Where is the sophistry that can soothe my mind? where the opiate, whose benumbing influence shall lull my senses to forgetfulness?

I feel infinitely the pressure of my own weighty anguish; yet I have a more acute sorrow to experience, when I shall witness the sufferings of Lord Denmore. I have ventured to visit his bust; I have bathed it with tears; I have pressed my feverish lip to the cold marble. Why, why did it not freeze me into death?

The chaise is ready.—I depart.

LETTER XXI.

The Same to the Same.

Portman-Square, August 16, 1796.

WHAT a journey have I experienced! what tears have I shed! what sighs, what agonizing sighs have I breathed, during the last twelve hours! Oh, Frances! how strongly has my startled imagination pictured the faded form, the pallid cheek, of the rash Lady Denmore. How horrible has death appeared in the shrunk remains of her whom I have destroyed; and yet, how gladly should I welcome the ghastly tyrant, would he but snatch me from this world of sorrow!

If Lady Denmore expires, I will instantly depart for Ireland. My pre-

fence would be hateful to her family ;— her husband would abhor me, the world condemn, and nature shudder at my conduct. Ah, Frances ! what have I done ? I have torn asunder the sweetest bonds of social faith, the sacred union of wedded love ! I have crept into the bosom of friendship, been cherished by its warmth ; and, grown into strength, I have stung it, even to destruction !

Why, why did I receive the attentions of Lord Denmore ? Why did I permit him to remove me from my obscure retreat ? to place me in the vortex of fascination, and to tempt me beyond the strength of my resisting fortitude ? It is not yet too late to preserve my fame inviolate ;—would to Heaven I could also snatch the beautiful, the rash Lady Denmore from premature destruction !

I will, if the spell which holds me can be broken, I will quit this house of
sorrow ;

sorrow; and, by industry, provide myself the scanty means of life: its pleasures will ever be aliens to my bosom. Yet, fancy often turns, with tearful eyes, to the melancholy haunts of Denmore Castle; and a presentiment hangs still about my heart, that *there* my misery will terminate.

There, Frances, my dear mother perished! There sleep those ashes, which memory should consecrate with filial tears! Shall I then depart? Shall I forsake the sanctuary where her sorrows found repose? Will not her sainted spirit soothe my aching bosom, collect my wandering senses, steal from my bosom the thorn of anguish, and point, with smiling hope, to happier regions? —I know not how I can answer to such questions.

I have been three hours beneath the roof of the amiable Duchess, Lady Denmore's mother. Every virtue that

can exalt the human mind, every grace that can refine the heart, inhabits the breast of this venerable woman. Frances, I have seen her; I have wept at her feet; I have sighed forth my sorrows in her bosom. She believes me innocent; and blames the jealous frenzy of her too irritable daughter. She has even pitied Lord Denmore; while she reproached herself for having promoted an union betwixt two beings so opposite in their natures. Is not this the criterion of an enlightened mind; the philosophy of Reason?

Miss Cecil has been with Lady Denmore ever since the hour of fatal desperation: Even her report of me to the Duchess of Aldborough could not awaken suspicions, which would, aided by prejudice, have brought my miseries to a climax. I am surrounded by a tempestuous sea of perils; yet I have one hope, amidst the wrecks on every side,

side, which sustains my fortitude; the hope that my innocence will be clearly ascertained, though my despair should be completed. I will relinquish my pen for a few hours. Every moment is marked by some new horror! I am commanded to appear before Lord Denmore. I shudder—but I must obey the summons.

Evening.

I HAVE borne my trial of fortitude, and I still exist, -to experience a new sense of sorrow. I have met the stern, the angry gaze of my distracted guardian, and I have been informed by Miss Cecil, that she heard him curse the hour which first gave me to the light. Oh God! had my dear father lived, would *he* have cursed me?

Lord Denmore kneels perpetually beside the pillow of his wife; she sees,

she knows him not; she feels not the tear which rolls from his sleepless eyes upon her pale cheek: she is unconscious that those arms enfold her from which she estranged herself, madly estranged herself, prompted by the demon Jealousy, and taunted by the scorpions of suspicion.

Since my arrival, Lord Denmore has not once spoken to me. I honour his sensibility; I participate in all his sufferings. I know that the moment of distress is too sacred to admit of trivial forms. I will await a more tranquil period for an explanation of events, and I will await it in silence.

Sometimes I fancy that I have power to meliorate his tortures; vain and delusive thought! Can the same object produce a poison and its antidote?—Impossible.

Dreadful is the reflection, that, of all existing beings, I am the ill-fated mortal
whom

whom Lord Denmore must in future hate. I, who would, without a resisting pang, yield up my life, to preserve his bosom from one hour of anguish.

Lady Denmore's languor augments every moment; the benumbing drug still lingers in her veins, and though the strength of its influence has been subdued, its dregs continue to creep with subtle mischief through the heart. The hand of death seems to press heavily on her eye-lids, and her feeble voice can scarcely convey the fainting groan of approaching dissolution. Frances, if you would witness the most touching, the most terrible of mortal miseries, you must behold the bed of death; where youth and beauty are destined to expire, amidst the tears of unavailing sorrow.

Lord Denmore looks and talks like a maniac; the Duchess of Aldborough is

confined to her chamber, nearly distracted; and yet, *I* am alive to describe the scene of horror! What a strangely stubborn compound is the human heart! —Adieu.

LETTER XXII.

The Same to the Same.

August 18, 1796.

LORD Denmore had been prevailed on to quit the chamber of despair, and we this day dined together. He was silent and gloomy. Not a syllable escaped his lips, though many laboured sighs stole from his bosom. He frequently seemed as if preparing to speak, but his articulation was suddenly arrested; and a convulsive trembling shook his frame,

frame, as marked as it was touching. Alas ! Frances ! he is strangely, mournfully altered ! His form is meagre ; his eyes languid ; his brow perpetually contracted ; his cheek has forgot to smile, and his voice is rendered feeble by affliction. I have heard, that, to a sensible and exalted mind, a beloved object becomes more dear in proportion as he is unfortunate. I am almost afraid to examine the truth of such an opinion, and I would rather doubt its authenticity, than venture to scrutinize my heart upon the subject.

Our mute and melancholy meal was scarcely ended, when we were roused from the stagnation of sorrow by the presence of Miss Cecil. On her entering the room, my eyes instantly met her contemptuous glances ; while my cheek reddened with scorn and indignation. “ Lord Denmore,” said she, with a significant tone, “ I did not expect to meet you in
such

such society. I have been to the chamber of my dying friend, where at least I prepared to find a lamenting husband! But the claims of Miss St. Leger must have weight to overpower all others! since humanity yields precedence to her resistless fascinations." Lord Denmore rose abruptly. "I merit the reproof," said he: "this is no place for me at such a moment." In an instant he was out of the room; and I was left alone with my designing enemy.

After many looks of anger and disdain, Miss Cecil unburthened the full malice of her heart: "You are strangely obtrusive," said she: "this indelicate effrontery may defy the opinion of the world; but it will also stigmatize the amiable woman, under whose roof you dare avow your guilt. She will obtain but little credit for having sheltered the destroyer of her child, the mistress of Lord Denmore." I answered her calumny

lummy by silent scorn. She continued :

“ The Duchess of Aldborough is my friend ; and availing myself of that privilege which I know she will sanction, I require your immediate absence. If your situation demands pecuniary aid, I will assist you : at all events you must not sleep again under this roof. Therefore without hesitation I inform you, that my carriage waits to convey you hence. Be prudent, and obey the wishes of Lord Denmore.”

“ Of Lord Denmore ! ” repeated I, with astonishment.

“ You may start and look aghast,” replied Miss Cecil ; “ but what I have asserted is strictly true. The delicacy of his mind would not suffer him to command your absence ; he therefore imposed the unpleasant task on me. I have executed my commission, and shall now leave you to act as you think proper.”

“ I will

"I will go!" said I, bursting into tears. "I will go, Madam, where my presence shall no more interrupt Lord Denmore's happiness. Inform him how patiently I submit to his resentment; how readily I acquiesce in this severe injunction." I quitted the room, and rushing through the hall, passed the street-door. Miss Cecil's carriage was in waiting, but I disdained to enter it, and with hasty steps hurried along the pavement.

I still wore the dress in which I had travelled from Denmore Castle. A blue habit, and a plain black hat, were too simple to attract attention from those whom I met, but of whose observation I should at that moment have been unconscious.

At the corner of Grosvenor-square, I stopped to consider what steps I should take for my present safety: I could not refrain from tears, and was standing with
the

the fixed gaze of mute affliction, when a pretty fair woman, young, and neatly dressed, stopping on the foot-path, inquired which was the house of Lord Melcomb. I briefly answered, that being an entire stranger, I did not know. She again addressed me: "Have you lost your way, young lady? Can I set you right? Whither do you wish to go?"

"I am looking for a lodging," said I, faintly.

We walked side by side several paces: the stranger said she was in haste, but, as I seemed to want a guide, she would not leave me. "I can accommodate you with an apartment," said she; "but it is on the second floor; to-morrow we may find something better: at least with me you will be safe; for in this great scene of noise and folly, and at this hour, many dangers would await you." I confessed the hu-
manity

manity of her offer, and accepted it with avidity.

We proceeded hastily along a street near Oxford-road, till we came to a neat and decent-looking house; on the private door of which was painted, "Blonzely, Fancy-dress maker." We entered. I observed several elegant young women in the work-room through which we passed; and, with many civil expressions, I was left in my apartment.

Here I sat down, with a heart full, almost to bursting. I recalled every event of my life with a mournful exactitude, and looked forward with an aching bosom to the dark prospect now before me.

LETTER XXIII.

The Same to the Same.

August 21, 1796.

IN my new habitation I found myself, for the first moment in my life, forlorn and unprotected. I looked round the peopled world, and amongst the millions that breathed, either in sorrow or prosperity, I knew no being, except yourself, to whom I could apply for consolation. I sighed when I felt the weight of calumny which pressed me almost to destruction; but my pride towered above despondency, when I recollected that I had been driven from Lord Denmore's presence, stigmatized with the crime of domestic treachery, and forbid even to plead my exculpation. Sustained by these reflections, my innocence

cence seemed to arm itself against its oppressors, and I resolved to bear my fate with fortitude and resignation.

As the evening advanced, I began to feel faint for want of refreshment. I applied to Mrs. Blonzely for a direction where I might find provision for the morrow's breakfast, and likewise pens, ink, and paper: these I considered as the only means from which I could derive consolation in my disgraceful banishment; and I was eager to procure them without delay, naturally anticipating a night of sleepless rumination. I sent to request Mrs. Blonzely's instruction, being an entire stranger to the metropolis; and she returned for answer, that she would in a few minutes attend me.

The interval was employed in thought. I now began to perceive that I had acted unwisely, in following the first impulse of resentment, and in accepting my dismissal from Miss Cecil's abrupt message,

message, which I could not teach myself to believe the real or authorized sentiment of my liberal and generous patron. I knew too much of his philanthropic nature to suppose him capable of abandoning to poverty and sorrow a being whom he had reared from infancy, and fostered with unbounded kindness. I beheld, as the gloom of despair diffused, those traits of envy and malevolence, which had invariably been the characteristics of Miss Cecil's mind; and supposing that she was instigated by Lady Denmore, I still hoped that my guardian's resentment was not implacable. At one moment I was half resolved to return, and to throw myself at the feet of my patron. But Reason whispered, will it not be supposed that you depend on the secret influence you hold in his affections? that you avail yourself of his partiality, to re-obtain an asylum under his protection, even in defiance

defiance of his wife, and at the expence of his reputation? Then there was also the chance of being again spurned from his threshold, taunted by the domestics of the family, and, what was still worse, insulted by Miss Cecil. These cogitations palsied my fortitude; and the proud spirit which had not been subdued by persecution, still refused to bend, where abject humiliation was anticipated as the consequence.

The occupation which Mrs. Blonzely followed seemed to present the means for my temporary support, till I could either convince my guardian how unworthily he had treated me, or accustom my mind to the vicissitudes of my fortune. I then resolved to adopt some honourable profession, the education which I have received affording me many subterfuges from distress: I knew that I could subsist with credit to myself, and honour to my patron, by teaching music,

music, drawing, or becoming a governess in some family of distinction. This reflection solaced my afflicted heart; while, endeavouring to forget Lord Denmore's present unkindness, I gratefully thanked him for his past generosity. "He has enabled me to provide for myself," said I, sighing; "and to the latest moment of a life which shall not be sullied by dishonour, I will not cease to bless him."

I was interrupted by Mrs. Blonzely, who came to "obey my commands." I would have sent, or taken the servant with me; but my hostess informed me, that she could not think of trusting a young person of my appearance in the streets alone, or even with a domestic, at such an hour, and in such a state of mind. I started as she concluded her remark; and began to suppose that she was acquainted with my situation.

She

She smiled. "Fear nothing," said she ;
"I am discreet."

"What should I fear?" inquired I,
with some emotion.

"You are alarmed, young lady," said
Mrs. Blonzely : "perhaps I have awa-
kened your distress by my incautious
expression ; but you must forgive me :
I really cannot see so much grace,
fashion, and beauty, without feeling
interested for its safety." I looked
confused. She paused a few moments,
and then proceeded :

"Alone, so dressed, so sorrowful,
what am I to conclude? I cannot
believe that you are assuming a cha-
racter ; for innocence is the charm
which embellishes your features ; and
yet you have not the appearance of one
who has been accustomed to misfortune :
how then does it happen, that you are a
stranger in the metropolis, without a
protector,

protector, without even clothes to change your dress? How did you travel? What is the motive of your journey?" This succession of impertinent questions astonished and perplexed me; while my embarrassment continued to augment, in proportion as she displayed her effrontery. Mrs. Blonzely was too practised a traveller in the labyrinths of life to lose her clue by an indiscreet impatience. She perceived that I was alarmed; and she was too subtle an inquisitor to put the object of her curiosity upon its guard. I returned no answers to her rapid inquiries; and she thought that, at least for the present, it would be prudent not to repeat them.

We proceeded towards Bond-street. I never beheld such a variety of motley characters, as there met my eyes. Every thing appeared grotesque. Men and women seemed like any

thing but what they were ; I was lost in astonishment ; carriage succeeded carriage ; and the beauty of one female had scarcely excited my surprise, before another claimed its admiration. This, thought I, is a scene of wonders ! Is it possible that any mortal can know sorrow, where every thing seems marked with delight and prosperity ? But the circumstance, of all others, which excited my astonishment, was that of beholding men in the finical employment of folding gauzes, rolling ribands, adjusting feathers, and forming bouquets, with all the conceited effeminacy of our sex, blended with the oppressive effrontery of theirs ; while crowds of lovely young women wandered up and down, either seeking disgrace as a subterfuge from want, or concealing the miseries of guilt beneath the destructive colouring of artificial beauty.

“ I do

“ I do not wonder at your silent astonishment,” said Mrs. Blonzely ; “ for, to a stranger’s eye, every thing here must seem extraordinary. We will walk slowly, and perhaps I can amuse you by some account of the various personages who pass and repass before us. This is the centre of polite confusion. This busy street, though the least convenient either for the pedestrian or equestrian, is thronged during the whole morning with carriages and foot-passengers.”

“ For what purpose ?” said I.

“ To see, and to be seen,” replied Mrs. Blonzely ; “ to excite astonishment, and to furnish subjects for the caricaturist. All the human race exist upon the follies of each other : the fool laughs at the wit, and the wit makes his jest at the expence of the fool. Do you see that superb carriage stopping at the dentist’s on the opposite side of the street ? The lady who waits in it

is the mistress of a nobleman ; a woman whose knowledge extends not to the twenty-four letters ; whose manners are vulgar and profligate ; whose beauty does not exceed mediocrity ; but who dissipates three thousand pounds a-year on her person and establishment."

" Astonishing !" exclaimed I.

" Not more so than what I am now going to tell you," said Mrs. Blonzely.

" The gentleman whom you see talking to her, in the shabby black coat, with his head uncovered, was the tutor of the same nobleman. He is a man of genius, and a scholar ; and though he has devoted many years to the service of his pupil ; though he has dedicated three exquisite poems, two plays, and four pamphlets to him in the course of the last seven years, he has passed three of them in a prison, for a debt of two hundred pounds ; and now, only recently emancipated, advertises to teach languages for the paltry reward of half-a-crown

crown a lesson."—I sighed, but could not make any comment.

"Here," said she, shaking my arm, to rouse me from the reverie into which her story had absorbed me; "here, in the green coat, comes a baronet, who at the age of sixty married a beautiful girl, of only seventeen. The venerable sinner has two mistresses, who publicly exhibit his liveries, and who equally share his hours of unblushing profligacy: yet, only last year, he, on the false witness of a discarded servant, obtained a divorce, with five thousand pounds damages, against a young officer, who being disinherited for his folly, shortly after put a period to his existence: the unhappy wife is now at Bristol, dying of a broken heart."

"Heavens!" exclaimed I; "can such things be possible?"

“ We meet with them every day,” answered Mrs. Blonzely ; “ and custom has familiarized the mind to every thing preposterous. Those old-fashioned characters, a good husband, a chaste wife, a modest spinster, a constant lover, and an honourable friend, are almost exploded. Indeed, we now and then meet with such gothic personages ; but they are so fearful of the ridicule which will attach itself to the singularity of their characters, that they are obliged to assume the appearance of vice, in order to obtain the *entré* of society.”

“ Wonderful !” exclaimed I.

“ It is, nevertheless, true,” said Mrs. Blonzely. “ I know wives, who are ashamed of being seen with their husbands ; husbands, that support mistresses whom they despise ; women of sense, who pretend to be idiots ; and divines, who affect to scoff at religion : and yet
the

the wife would, were she not afraid of being laughed at, become a domestic prodigy ; the husband, but for the dread of sarcasm, would be an example of fidelity ; the woman of understanding, did she not tremble at the title of a pedant, would be a rational being ; and the divine, could he be persuaded that he should escape the lash of ridicule, would set a laudable example for piety, virtue, and morality."

Mrs. Blonzely paused, to take breath, for a moment, and then continued :

" Here comes an unsuccessful dramatic writer ; to whom report gives every claim that might have insured applause : yet he has had two comedies and three farces damned on the first representation ; while he sees the illiterate farragoes of a rival author performed every night, with universal applause, to overflowing houses."

“What is the origin of such injustice?” said I.

“The political opinions of the writer,” replied Mrs. Blonzely. “Every thing is now swayed by prejudice; and though a few enlightened individuals have candour to patronize, and judgment to discriminate, where talents look up to them for protection; the majority of mankind, the ill-natured, the envious, and the ignorant, will still predominate.”

“Thank Heaven!” exclaimed I, “there are yet a few, who rescue the human race from the stigma of prejudice.”

“It is indeed fortunate for genius, and honourable to humanity,” said Mrs. Blonzely; “and however the popular fury of the times may condemn the aristocracy of kingdoms, this island has to boast, amidst all its folly and dissipation,

diffipation, some names that adorn nobility, and do honour to their country."

I now discovered that we had twice measured the length of Bond-street; and the darkness interrupting our observations, I purchased such articles as I wanted, and we once more turned our footsteps towards Oxford-street. The evening was sultry; and as we strolled slowly along, an idea occurred, that I might obtain some intelligence respecting Lady Denmore, by employing Mrs. Blonzely to make inquiries. With this hope I informed her, that having heard how dangerously ill Lady Denmore was, and being lately come from the neighbourhood of Denmore Castle, I felt anxious to know whether or not she was out of danger. Mrs. Blonzely listened attentively; but not without some questions, which proved her scepticism, and awakened my apprehensions that she would deny my request.

After a pause of several minutes, during which her eyes were fixed on mine, she consented to attend me ; and in a quarter of an hour we entered Portman-square.

It was now eleven o'clock. Frances, how violently did my heart palpitate when I approached that threshold, from which I had, only a few hours before, been driven with unmerited ignominy. I could not suppress my tears. I however concealed them, and loitered on the pavement, at a short distance from the door, while Mrs. Blonzely made the important inquiries.

She remained absent a much longer time than I thought necessary for the message I had commissioned her to deliver : I could perceive her, by the light in the hall, in close conversation with a female, who, as far as I could distinguish, appeared to be Miss Cecil's *femme de chambre*. I crossed the coachway,

way, and took my stand near the iron pallisadoes opposite the house. The moments seemed like hours, while I waited for Mrs. Blonzely's re-joining me ; and yet, every time she moved, I trembled with apprehension.

In defiance of the efforts which I made to calm my thoughts, my agitation every minute augmented, till I scarcely knew where I stood, or what was the object of my inquietude. I gazed with anxious eyes at the window of Lady Denmore's apartment. I perceived lights moving in many directions ; by the bustle, ill-suited to the stillness which should be observed in a sick chamber, my fears anticipated the worst that could happen ; and I briefly concluded that all of her mortal suffering was over. At one moment I was upon the point of rushing towards the door, and with frantic-despair, of throwing myself on the mercy of Lord Denmore. This step,

my grief, my compunction, my affection, which, in spite of my resentment, still lingered in my heart, suggested: but, when I was preparing to execute what my excessive sorrow meditated, my pride, and the remembrance of Miss Cecil's formal message from Lord Denmore, subdued the resolution, and I still watched and waited with the most restless impatience.

It was then that I questioned my mind on the variety of its sensations. It was during this short period of hope and fear, that I dared tacitly to justify even the weakness of my nature. I inquired of my palpitating heart, what hast thou done, poor sensitive trembler, to merit this incessant torture? Is not Lady Denmore unworthy of such a husband? Has she proved her confidence in him, her friendship for me, by this rash step, which will stigmatize us both for ever? Am I not entitled to her husband's esteem,

esteem, his protection? and ought I not to resent the cruel suspicions which carry with them an imputation that will destroy my fame? Alas, Frances! these were the pernicious, the destructive questions of a mind leaning towards error; for too well I know, that the woman who can once reason on the propriety of a passion, is at the same moment the slave of its dominion: we are ever seeking a pretext to sanction even our follies, with the privilege of conscience; and she who endeavours to convince her judgment, that she may, on any plea, violate the laws of prudence, will soon teach her bosom to resist the approaches of compunction.

After waiting near twenty minutes, Mrs. Blonzely quitted the hall, and the door being closed, I flew to meet her. My inquiries were various and rapid. I demanded whether Lord Denmore was at home, and how his wife had
passed

passed the evening. Mrs. Blonzely was slow in her answers, and cautious in every word she uttered. I perceived a total change in her manner; she spoke in an authoritative tone; took hold of my arm, as if to make me a prisoner; talked of the tricks and deceptions which were daily practised in this great metropolis; and concluded by significantly remarking, that *she* was not easily deceived, either by the most specious or the most daring impostor. I listened, but had not power to answer her: every faculty of my soul seemed to awake, as from a dream: I now perceived that the open candour of my mind had exposed me to another trial; and I resolved, on the first opportunity that should offer, to seek a more secure asylum.

We returned home. Mrs. Blonzely followed me to my apartment; where taking a chair without the smallest ceremony,

mony, she seated herself opposite to that into which I had thrown myself; and looking stedfastly at me during several minutes, thus opened the subject of conversation :

“ I believe that you are a stranger to this part of the world ; you seem wholly unacquainted with its people and its manners : yet your demeanour and your looks convince me, that you have been accustomed to the higher orders of society. There is an air of fashion about you, which places you, at the first glance, above the vulgar.”

“ I do not know the criterion by which you judge of external characteristics,” said I, smiling. “ I have seen but little of the fashionable world ; and I have found few examples whom I would wish to imitate. If, therefore, you mean to compliment my manners or my person, you have adopted a mode
of

of conveying your approbation, rather unfavourable to its purpose."

"Pardon me, young Lady," said Mrs. Blonzely. "I conceive that there is a something undescribable about people accustomed to move in the exalted circles of society. Ease, elegance, vivacity, politeness—"

"Rather say affectation, profusion, insolence, and effrontery," interrupted I. "These, I have been told, are by some considered as the indisputable traits of a modern education. From my own observation, I am sorry to say, that I have met with some examples too strongly marked with unfavourable characteristics. Yet the poison is not without its antidote; and the arrogance of rank is easily chastised by the stern voice of Truth; which, in defiance of oppression, will speak, and will be heard, even amidst the chaos of noise and folly."

"All

"All are not what you describe," said Mrs. Blonzely.

"No! Heaven forbid!" answered I. "There are exceptions, where even an intercourse with the base has not been able to contaminate the purity of virtue. Rank does not render its possessor vicious: but vice will at any time degrade nobility. The temptations are infinite; and those who soar above them by superiority of mind, have a double claim to our admiration." Mrs. Blonzely was mute. Her opinions did not exactly coincide with mine upon this important subject: she therefore changed it, to one more calculated to gratify her curiosity.

"How long have you been in London?" was her abrupt question.

"Only a few days."

"How comes it that you are alone, and unprotected? Have you no acquaintance, no friend to take care of you?"

you? There is something peculiarly mysterious in your language and appearance. You talk highly; but your conduct seems bordering on degradation. You must forgive me if I conclude that some imprudent step, on your part, has reduced you to the necessity of seeking a protector."

"I can protect myself, and therefore want none," said I, with scorn, excited by her impertinent inuendoes.

"That may be very heroic," cried Mrs. Blonzely: "but a lovely young woman, like yourself, should not be permitted to run wild about the town, unshielded from its temptations. And pray, since we have commenced the subject, what motive brought you to London? and whom do you seek? I wish to be of service to you, if you will act fairly, and tell me the real truth."

"Do you question my veracity?"

"Why,

“Why, to speak plainly, I do not exactly believe you to be what you would wish to seem. The porter at my Lord Denmore’s hinted something which has awakened my suspicion.”

“Then you have betrayed me !” said I, unguardedly. Mrs. Blonzely smiled. “You are alarmed without a cause,” answered she. “I guessed that you were of a different class from that which you pretended to be ; and I am now convinced, that I was right in my conjectures.”

“What did the porter say at Lord Denmore’s,” inquired I eagerly.

“Not much,” replied Mrs. Blonzely : “he only told me, that Lady Denmore was still in great danger, and that my Lord was almost distracted.”

“Did he say nothing more ?”

“I am not honoured with your confidence,” cried Mrs. Blonzely ; “and perhaps

perhaps you will deem my conversation impertinent."

"O, no!" interrupted I. "Tell me, I conjure you, tell me all that passed."

"I do not feel authorised to discover the secrets of Lord Denmore's family," replied the artful Blonzely. "There are events which, however natural in themselves, may be productive of much public reprehension."

"What events do you allude to," said I. "Be explicit; let me know the worst, my patience is almost exhausted by doubt and apprehension. Why, O! tell me why Lord Denmore's inquietude has augmented."

"You seem interested in this business," said Mrs. Blonzely. "I thought you were a stranger, and knew nobody in London; that the higher orders of society excited nothing in your bosom, but

but disgust. Whence arises this solicitude — this eager anxiety respecting Lord Denmore? Ah, young deceiver! you cannot play on my credulity: I see you, what you are; and I pity you sincerely.”

“Then relieve my sorrow,” said I, “by unfolding, without reserve, all that that you heard from Lord Denmore’s porter.”

“You love Lord Denmore,” said Mrs. Blonzely. “I perceive you love him; that is evident at least, though you have not sufficient reliance on my integrity to make the confession.” I blushed, and lost the clue of our conversation. She laughed, and bade me recollect myself.

“Did you hear nothing further?” said I, hesitating between every word.

“Nothing very extraordinary,” replied Mrs. Blonzely; “only that Lord Denmore’s

more's affliction originated in more causes than one."

"Did the porter name them?" inquired I eagerly. "Was my absence mentioned? Is Lord Denmore offended? Tell me; for I have now betrayed myself; and future concealment will be useless."

"I feel little gratified by a confidence that was involuntary," said Mrs. Blonzely; "particularly when I recollect, that this is not the first time I have been obliged to protect fugitive young ladies, who were tired of their homes, and weary of a guardian's authority. But since you are at last inclined to act candidly, I will inform you, that your friend, Lord Denmore, has been all the evening little better than a madman; and has dispatched messengers over half the town in search of you; and my Lord's valet-de-chambre says, that if
you

you are not found, God knows what what will be the consequence."

"Does Lord Denmore wish me to return?" said I, with a faltering voice.

"Wish it!" replied Mrs. Blonzely; "why, he is almost out of his senses. But I did not drop the slightest hint that I had you in my house; because I thought that this was the time for you to make your own terms; and, by what I hear, my Lord will not be able to exist without you."

I sunk into her arms. The joy which my heart felt almost amounted to agony. The conflict betwixt the conscious triumph of innocence, and the affections which time and gratitude had implanted in my bosom, was undescribable. A profusion of tears rushed from my eyes, and bore with them a part of the heavy load which hung upon my heart. I revived; but I continued to weep abundantly. Mrs. Blonzely endeavoured to soothe

soothe my distress, by assuring me, that Lord Denmore would 'be brought to any terms; for that his despair was terrible.'

Her words roused me to a frown of indignation. "Brought to any terms!" repeated I: "what terms can I propose to such a being as Lord Denmore?—to my friend, my guardian, my protector?" The woman shook her head, with a sneer of incredulity.

"There is but one character more interesting than all that you have mentioned," cried she. "He may be still dearer to you, if you play your cards wisely." I looked aghast, and shuddered.

"What character, woman!" said I, with indignant rage.

"Your lover, to be sure!" replied Mrs. Blonzely: "what else can he be, while Lady Denmore lives? and who knows but, if you act prudently, and

keep up appearances with the world, some day or other you may be a countess. We have seen more extraordinary things happen, where the object had neither your youth nor your beauty to recommend her: and trust me, young women may do what they will, if they determine to follow good counsel."

I was mute with astonishment: the whole countenance of my companion seemed to assume a new expression, while my suspicions were indubitably confirmed, and my terror became infinite. She perceived that she had ventured too far on the subject, and with an artful smile, taking both my hands in her's, exclaimed: "By Heavens! I do not wonder at Lord Denmore's anxiety: this lovely face would turn the heads of half the human race! But you must not spoil it with tears: compose your spirits, and endeavour to take

some rest ; in the morning we will contrive a plan for your future advantage."

I drew my hands from her's, and requested that she would leave me. The night was far advanced ; and I knew that, to escape at such an hour, would be impracticable. I therefore, on her quitting the apartment, fastened my door, and being little inclined to sleep, employed the silent hours in writing this long letter.—Adieu.

LETTER XXIV.

The Same to the Same.

August 13, 1796.

I CONTINUED writing till day broke in upon me. The weariness of my mind produced a lassitude which would have disposed me to sleep, had not fear, when
I recol-

I recollected my situation, kept me waking. I continued to indulge myself in the ruminations of melancholy, till the sun rose; when, supposing that no ill could happen, my door being secured, and the streets full of passengers, I threw myself upon the sofa. My brain now seemed deadened by the unceasing pressure of thought: I was scarcely mindful of present prospects, or conscious of past sorrows; while I felt a sort of apathy which had neither hope nor fear to rouse it from the torpor of affliction. In this state I continued till a feverish slumber overpowered my senses.

I had not slept long when a tapping at my chamber-door awakened me; and immediately I heard Mrs. Blonzely's voice, calling me by my name, and inquiring how I had rested. I rose, and she entered the room. On seeing me dressed, she expressed her astonishment; remarked the languor of my eyes, the

paleness of my cheek; conjured me to take some breakfast in her apartment, and assured me that every thing in her power should be done, to render my situation agreeable. I knew, that by address alone I could escape from the fangs of the harpy; therefore, with seeming readiness, I consented to accompany her.

We descended to the first floor, which I found, to my infinite astonishment, fitted up with tasteful magnificence. The furniture was composed of blue silk and burnished gold; the glasses of large dimensions; the cabinets richly decorated with *Or molu*; and the chimney adorned with *lustres*, of peculiar splendour. Breakfast was served with a refinement of elegance equal to the apartment; and a domestic in a laced livery waited, with ceremonious respect. The change in appearance did not confine itself to the mansion only: Mrs. Blonzely,

Blonzely, whom I had before seen in a common cotton gown, with a straw hat, whose figure was adorned with the decent plainness of honest industry, was now dressed in a cambric wrap, trimmed with fine lace; her head was encircled with a turban of embroidered muslin; and she affected all the elegant languor of a fashionable *petite maitresse*.

The servant was dismissed as soon as the tea was made. I looked around me with mute astonishment; and trembled while I meditated the means of escaping from the abode of deception. Mrs. Blonzely was too deeply practised in the arts of her profession not to observe the secret agitation of my mind. "You are surprised, Miss St. Leger," said she, "at finding yourself in these superb apartments. But I must now be explicit. The occupation which I appear to follow is a mere blind to my real situation. I am the mistress of this house, which is

dedicated to refined and elegant pursuits. Here the liberal and the enchanting only meet; every thing that secrecy can shield, and wealth procure, may be found beneath my roof. The occupation which I pretend to follow authorises the frequent visits of females, whatever their rank in life may be; and the circumspection which is observed by every individual in my family, renders them secure from the jealous eyes of the vulgar and suspicious." I trembled, and grew pale. She took my hand, and continued:

"I perceive that you are alarmed: you have nothing to fear, believe me. This is not the abode of constraint: here all is freedom, and voluntary enjoyment: I have a reputation to support; and while you are under my protection, no danger can await you." I breathed once more, without the interruption of a fluttering heart.

Assuring

Assuring Mrs. Blonzely that I was perfectly satisfied with her promise that I should be free from constraint, I finished my breakfast; and having adjusted my dress, I requested to know what I had to pay for my night's lodging; at the same time informing my hostess, that I should, without delay, return to Lord Denmore's.

"I will accompany you thither," said Mrs. Blonzely: "perhaps it will be necessary that some person should ascertain where and with whom you have passed the night. I am no stranger to Lord Denmore, and he will rely on my veracity."

I knew not what to say. The idea of making Mrs. Blonzely my companion and my advocate was terrible; and to incur her displeasure, or provoke her malevolence, was a no less dangerous experiment. I paused, and meditated.

“ You must decide quickly,” said Mrs. Blonzely, interrupting my reverie ; “ for I have an infinite variety of occupations which claim my moments, and cannot lose my time in unprofitable attendance. I am ready to conduct you to any place you will name ; but my apartments are engaged after this evening ; and by what I can guess from your manner and appearance, they would not suit you, even were not that the state of my arrangements. I know a friend near town, who has a decent room to dispose of ; and, in case you do not keep your resolution of returning to Lord Denmore’s, perhaps, by my being security to pay the rent, she will receive you as her lodger.” My scorn was equal to the insolence of my companion. I rose abruptly, and was quitting the drawing-room, when I heard a person ascending the stairs, whose tone of voice nearly annihilated

annihilated me. It was Sir Hector Upas.

I rushed into a *boudoir* which joined the apartment, and, locking the door, stood trembling like a culprit. Sir Hector accosted my hostess with his usual tone of pomposity. "Well, Blonzely!" said he, "what is the news in the world of enjoyment? Have you received any answer from my divine Cleopatra? Have you presented her the set of pearls, the heron's feather, the cabinet inlaid with the eyes of petrified serpents? Has she accepted the palanquin studded with Ethiops' teeth; the most curious thing of the kind ever imported? I had two hundred black jaws ransacked to find ivory of the most beautiful colour: the vagabonds little thought that they would arrive at the honour of embellishing the throne of the divinity whom I should worship."

"She refuses them all, Sir Hector!"

“What says she to the oriental ruby?” continued Sir Hector. “It belonged to Houlichumcory, the famous Princess of Chamnabar. It was a glorious spoil, though its colour seems to blush for the manner of its capture. I never sleep well when it is on my finger. You may keep it, Blonzely, yourself, if the divine Cleopatra should refuse to wear it. But what says the empress of my heart?”

“Sir Hector, you propose the business too abruptly,” replied Mrs. Blonzely. “A woman of her rank is only to be won by attentions: you must gratify her vanity, if you would secure her heart. You must sacrifice a favourite mistress, or discard your wife.”

“Impossible!” replied Sir Hector. “How am I to pay her public attentions, when my lady is ever at my elbow. Now, if you would arrange a little adventure for her also, I might settle

settle a *coup de maître*. What say you, my delectable Blonzely?"

"That is scarcely practicable," replied my hostess. "I have tried the experiment in several instances, and always found it fail. I was not long since offered a thousand pounds to entrap the wife of a Bishop; but she was too much accustomed to translations, to be the dupe of an original."

"Good, Blonzely! Good!" exclaimed Sir Hector.

"Besides," continued the ambassadress, "I do not think you were born to be honoured with the badge of infidelity. There are men whose very looks bespeak the destiny that awaits them; who creep through life, and seem to bend beneath the weight of their domestic donations. But you, Sir Hector, have a commanding look, that sets all shame at defiance." I could have smiled at any period when

my heart was less oppressed with sorrow.

"Well, Blonzely ! tell my disdainful Cleopatra," said Sir Hector, "that she may scatter the treasures of the eastern globe ; tell her that I await her decision with prodigious patience."

"I have my fears, notwithstanding your personal graces, Sir Hector," interrupted Mrs. Blonzely ; "I have indeed my fears, that there is a rival in the case."

"Is it possible ?" exclaimed Sir Hector.

"Every thing is possible with an artful woman," replied Mrs. Blonzely. "Why, do you know that she has accomplished her purpose in Portman-square ? that the whole family is thrown into confusion by her contrivances. She has long been in love with Mr. Treville, who, we all know, was the
early

early choice of Lady Denmore: and report does not scruple to hint, that to Miss Cecil's journey with that gentleman, Lord Denmore may attribute the rash conduct of his wife. Indeed Miss Cecil does not deny it; though she wishes the affair to be kept a profound secret."

"Blonzely, you alarm me prodigiously!" replied Sir Hector: "for of all the formidable coxcombs in the circles of refined seduction, I can think of none that equals this canting, conceited, clerical monopolizer. Why, do you know, that the fellow is eternally at my wife's elbow, when he is not making love to my enchanting Cleopatra?"

"Would it not be wise to encourage his attentions? they may rid you of the one, and set you at liberty to obtain the other," said Mrs. Blonzely.

"Why,

"Why, that would be a dangerous experiment," replied Sir Hector: "for if Lady Upas were not my wife, I should prefer her to Miss Cecil, all the world to nothing."

"Is it possible?" cried Mrs. Blonzely.

"'Tis true," replied Sir Hector: "and I have often thought of provoking her to commit an infidelity; with the hope that, after we were divorced, she would consent to live with me as my mistress."

"How eccentric!" exclaimed Mrs. Blonzely: "and yet you are looked upon by the world as the most indifferent of husbands."

"The world judges rightly," said Sir Hector. "I respect its opinions prodigiously, because they generally lean towards the strongest."

"An excellent reason. But there is some astonishment blended with its discrimination,"

crimination," continued Mrs. Blonzely; "for Lady Upas is unquestionably one of the brightest jewels in your possession."

"And the dearest I ever purchased!" sighed Sir Hector: "for I obtained her at the expence of my liberty. Lady Upas was one of those unblushing adventurers, who transport themselves to Asia with a determination to sell their charms to the highest bidder; and she has returned, like some that I could name, to prove that gratitude and feeling were not among her recommendations to preferment."

"At least she is grateful to you," Sir Hector.

"I did think last spring that she meant to reward me," said the nabob, sighing; "for she appeared to be in a galloping consumption: but she still lives!"

"Owing to your care, Sir Hector."

"Yes,

"Yes, Blonzely, it was to my care, indeed!" cried the nabob: "but let us drop the subject; it always makes me melancholy."

"I suspect that Miss Cecil is fond of Lord Denmore," said Mrs. Blonzely; "and that she waits impatiently for the death of his wife, in the hope of wearing her coronet."

"Prodigiously wicked!" exclaimed Sir Hector. "But you do not tell me what scheme I shall adopt to obtain my Cleopatra."

"I have only two things to recommend; a divorce from Lady Upas, or a splendid settlement. Miss Cecil's beauty is on the wane: she has tried all the allurements of the fashionable world; she has been a zealous attendant at the faro-banks, a daily equestrian in Hyde-Park, a constant visitor at the Opera, and a demure coquette in the drawing-room at St. James's. She has an old
chaperone

chaperone to set her off, a venal libeller to write for her, a favourite to excite the spirit of rivalry, and an effrontery to laugh at the world's opinion; and yet she aims at the rank of Lord Denmore's wife, with all the assumed pretensions of youth, innocence, and virtue."

The conclusion of this intelligence struck my heart with the force of electricity. I now discovered the motive of my enemy; the cause of her malice in giving Sir Hector's gallant epistle to Mr. Treville, with her request that he would shew it to my guardian; the malice of her coquetry with the clerical Adonis, and its effect on the mind of the fascinated Lady Denmore.

While I was still shuddering with horror at this combination of atrocities, Sir Hector rose to depart. "To-morrow you shall see me again," said he; "and, in the mean time, you may tell the disdainful enchantress, that
I am

I am prodigiously disposed to obey her commands : I therefore offer her *carte blanche*, rather than pursue the plan of divorce ; for if am sacrificed a second time, I am determined it shall be without benefit of clergy."

"And yet it will be a divine sacrifice !" said Mrs. Blonzely.

Sir Hector sighed deeply. "We are all the slaves of the delectable creatures," said he : "but I am determined to secure my triumph in this instance, if it is only to disappoint the coxcomb Treville."

I now waited for Sir Hector's departure, while my bosom beat, and my senses awoke from the stupor that oppressed them.

Sir Hector at length took his leave ; and Mrs. Blonzely, on my opening the door, gazed at me with eyes of fixed astonishment.

"Heavens,

“Heavens, child!” exclaimed she, “were you concealed in the *boudoir*? I thought you had ascended to your own apartment!”

I smiled, and was preparing to explain, that in my haste I had no other retreat by which I might avoid her visitor, when she interrupted me with

“Well! I trust that your curiosity has been amply gratified. You have heard the secrets of Lord Denmore’s family; you have witnessed Sir Hector’s proposal to Miss Cecil: in short, you fancy that we are all completely in your power. But mark me, young listener! if you divulge one syllable of what you have heard, I must in my own defence criminate you. I shall inform Lord Denmore that you met Sir Hector here by assignation; and that you passed a night in my house, for the purpose of premeditated gallantry.”

“Are

“Are you capable of uttering so infamous a falsehood?” said I.

“Keep my secret, and I will be as prudent as a matron,” replied Mrs. Blonzely. — “On your own taciturnity now depends your reputation. The world looks only to appearances; and it is not the number of amours which ruin a woman’s fame, but the want of management in keeping up the forms of propriety. Why, there is the lovely Lady Oakland; she was suspected, and driven from society, for what the world believed her first and only error. She was, with all her beauties, virtues, and accomplishments, deserted by her associates, and left to linger through a life of obscurity; while some of her more artful intimates revel in all the caprices of their fancy, sporting and playing their gambols, like the monkey; while their husbands, the dromedaries
of

of the group, are still their public attendants, to the great entertainment of the laughing multitude."

I rose to depart: Mrs. Blonzely caught my arm:—"Yet stay a moment longer, Miss St. Leger," said she gravely; "and promise that I may depend on your discretion."

"Since I must be silent, at the peril of my own reputation, I will," answered I. "Yet I beg you, madam, to remember, that an extorted promise may, without any violation of propriety, be broken."

Mrs. Blonzely hesitated as she was preparing a reply, and, looking shrewdly in my face, with her eyes half closed, and a smile upon her lip, shook her head significantly; again I turned towards the door, again she detained me: "You must not depart, so armed against me," said she. "I cannot trust my character to the mercy of a giddy girl."

girl. You must give me some security for that silence, for which I cannot rely either on your discretion or good-nature."

"What security can I offer, beyond my word of honour?" said I.

Mrs. Blonzely seemed to meditate for some moments; then smiling, as if she was half in jest, replied:—"Give me your written engagement, to forfeit a sum of money, if ever, through your means, the reputation of Miss Cecil should be tarnished."

"Ridiculous!" exclaimed I. "What engagement can I enter into, being under age, and wholly dependent on Lord Denmore?"

"Truly none, that can be of any pecuniary advantage to me; therefore, as it is my fancy, why will you refuse to comply, knowing that you are beyond the reach of the laws?" said Mrs. Blonzely.

"I cannot,

"I cannot, I will not enter into such an engagement," said I. "Neither my fortune nor my conscience will authorize the proceeding."

"As to your fortune, Miss St. Leger," replied Mrs. Blonzely, "the hazard will be on my side: and with respect to your conscience, the sooner it is released from its burden, the better." So saying, she rung the bell; a servant entered:—"Go, with my compliments to Lord Denmore," said Mrs. Blonzely, "and inform him, that I request to see him immediately." The barbarous audacity of my companion nearly overwhelmed me: I leant back in my chair, and scarcely able to utter the words, requested the servant to leave the room for a few moments. "You may wait," said Mrs. Blonzely: he retired.

I now addressed my persecutor earnestly, and with impressive sorrow: "That you are determined to insult
and

and to distress me," said I, "is most evident. The request which you have made, and the engagement which you wish to extort from me, are equally unreasonable. Still I feel tremblingly fearful of losing that reputation, which is dear to me as existence, and which, I am sorry to say, my preverse fortune has placed within your power. Know then, I am a poor defenceless orphan; a dependant on the bounty of one, whose esteem, most probably, I have forfeited for ever. I have been driven from the roof which sheltered me, by Miss Cecil's machinations;—I am reduced to the wretched alternative of being either your dupe, or her victim." My agitation began to master the powers of speech, and I was obliged to pause for a few moments. Mrs. Blonzely, neither softened by my words, nor impressed by my situation, searched her pocket-book with a look of perfect indifference.

indifference. At length producing a small stamped paper, she wrote a few lines, and presenting it to me, requested me to sign it. I read the writing; it was a promise to pay two hundred pounds, without naming any conditions whatever. I threw the note upon the ground, and with the spirit of roused indignation, refused, on any pretext, to sign so infamous an extortion.

Mrs. Blonzely now became outrageous:—She had no idea of being insulted by an insignificant Miss, who had neither fortune nor rank to authorise impertinence, when the first women in the kingdom were proud to call *her* friend, and ready to place their honour in *her* hands. I heard her with ineffable contempt. She had carried insult so far, that the sense of mortification was lost in the energy of resentment. She waited for my answer; but I was indig-

nantly silent, and she again addressed me:

"You may look proud, and affect the dignified impertinence of a woman of consequence; but I am too much accustomed to the arts of the most accomplished of my own sex, to be intimidated by a mere novice. And since you are so powerfully guarded by what *you* call prudence, but what *I* consider as mean, contemptible circumspection, I must briefly inform you, that you shall not quit my house till I am satisfied."

At this moment a loud knock at the street door interrupted the conversation; and a servant soon after entered the room to inform Mrs. Blonzely, that Mr. Treville was below, and wished to see her. My terror was now complete. I shook in every joint, and my heart beat with the very excess of apprehension. I knew that Mr. Treville would not fail to report the circumstance of my

my being at Mrs. Blonzely's, with all and more than the accustomed embellishments of a scandalous story. I was also convinced, that Lord Denmore's pride, and austere sense of honour, would never pardon my having passed a night under the roof of such a woman. I therefore conjured Mrs. Blonzely to permit, that I might again conceal myself; and she, dreading that I might discover the extortion she had attempted to practise on my timidity, readily consented.

Once more consigned to the unpleasing occupation of a listener, I heard Mr. Treville, with light steps, ascend the stairs to the drawing-room. The important conversation which followed, being too long for the extent of this letter, I shall defer communicating it till the next post, when I will not fail to write again.—Adieu.

LETTER XXV.

The Same to the Same.

August 14, 1796.

THE abominable menaces which Mrs. Blonzely had uttered, in order to enforce my compliance, and to extort a pecuniary promise from me, under the penalty of a disclosure which would forfeit my reputation, had so entirely possessed my mind, that I was scarcely inclined to hear what passed between her and Mr. Treville. I did not in fact believe that she would speak loud enough for me to gain much knowledge from my concealment; supposing that, though she would feel little delicacy respecting any discoveries which might affect her own reputation, she would at least be guarded and tenacious of the sacred

sacred character now entrusted to her discretion. It was as I imagined. Her voice was low and inarticulate; she entreated Mr. Treville to depart; and said she had business of the utmost importance, which demanded her attention.

“What business can you have,” said Mr. Treville, “of more importance than my happiness? I have something to communicate worth your hearing; so make up your mind to give me one half hour, and I will depart to the moment.” I observed that Mr. Treville addressed Mrs. Blonzely in his usual tone of voice; though she repeatedly requested him to speak softly.

“Why?” inquired Mr. Treville earnestly. “I hope we have no listeners.”

“O, no,” replied Mrs. Blonzely; “only I am apprehensive that some part of the family may overhear us; and

you know I am particularly circumspect in whatever concerns the reputation of my house."

"You are right," answered Mr. Treville—" *murus æneus conscientia sana* *.

How do you suppose that I am considered as the very epitome of every moral virtue, but from the caution I adopt to keep appearances in my favour? Well, but to business. I begin to be fatigued with the eternal coquetry of Emma Cecil; and I am no less weary of her chains, than I am solicitous to wear those of another object."

"Indeed! and what has so suddenly altered your opinion? I believed that your captivity was at least certain for a few weeks; for the world has whisperers, who have buzzed it about, that you were Miss Cecil's companion from Denmore Castle."

* A sound conscience is a wall of brass.

"And

"And therefore I am cured," said Mr. Treville. "The thing has been known just six days; it has only three more, before it will sink into oblivion. I have of course selected a new object for conquest; and who do you suppose is the favoured mortal?"

"Heaven knows!" cried Mrs. Blonzely.

"The charming *protégée* of Lord Denmore; — the pretty Gertrude St. Leger."

"Impossible!" exclaimed Mrs. Blonzely: "you cannot mean any thing so silly."

"I do positively," replied Mr. Treville; "and I will briefly tell you my motive. I am convinced that Denmore loves her; and I have not forgot the trick he played me with Lady Harriet Langton. Revenge is sweet, Blonzely; and the little Gertrude shall be mine."

"Do you think that Lord Denmore really loves her?"

"He adores her," replied Mr. Treville: "the fellow is quite a fool about her: he talks of nothing else; and should Lady Denmore die, it is the chance of ten to one, that he would marry her. I know that Emma Cecil looks with eager eyes for the hatchment: but the arms of Lord Denmore are destined for the pretty Gertrude."

"How do you know it?" inquired Mrs. Blonzely.

"He told me so. He has the most implicit confidence in me; and he declared, only this morning, that if Lady Denmore should expire, he would devote his days and his fortune to Miss St. Leger." Judge, Frances, judge what were my sensations.

"Now my charming, intelligent Blonzely, you must undermine the citadel,

citadel, before I can claim the honours of victory," continued Mr. Treville.

"You alarm me!—By what means?"

"By setting the malevolent and curious at work. Only throw a slight shade on her reputation, and the task will be more than half accomplished."

"I cannot indeed, Mr. Treville, I cannot think of it," said Mrs. Blonzely.

"I am too sincerely Miss Cecil's friend, to assist in supplanting her. Besides, I should be liable to a prosecution, for aiding in the seduction."

"Ridiculous!" exclaimed Mr. Treville. "I'll swear she seduced me; that she was in love with me; and that she employed you to make overtures of capitulation."

"Will it be believed?"

"Unquestionably," replied Mr. Treville. "The influence I hold in the circles of *haut ton*, will give authenticity to the report; for the old motto,

"*vincit veritas**, " is totally out of fashion. Come, come, none of your squeamish scrupulosity : I am determined to attempt the victory ; if I fail, the girl is Denmore's, and I shall, for a few hours, wear the willow."

"What will Lady Denmore say?" inquired Mrs. Blonzely.

"A great many things," replied Mr. Treville : "but she deserves to feel some compunction for having resisted my power with such gothic frigidity. She has fanned the flame till it is extinguished."

"We will talk of this business another time," said Mrs. Blonzely. "Perhaps the events of twelve hours may change your opinion : for, if I am not misinformed, the young lady is off. She has eloped from Lord Denmore's protection, and has left no account whatever of her future intentions."—I began to tremble.

* Truth will prevail.

"I will

“ I will instantly hasten to Portman-square,” said Mr. Treville. “ The report must be false ; for she seemed the most innocent and discreet of mortals. However, what you tell me is by no means unfavourable to my plan. I will take care that the elopement shall be no secret ; that it shall compose a topic for polite conversation ; fill the daily papers with conjectures, furnish a subject for advertisements and hand-bills, and adorn the windows of every print-shop from Cheapside to Bond-street. If she has eloped with any thing male, in the fashionable world, he shall be soon weary of the conquest, by its notoriety. If she is sentimentally and romantically disposed, her reputation being gone, she will soon be glad to find a friend and a protector. In short, *Je vive en espoir* ; and success must ultimately crown my wishes.” As he spoke, a carriage stopped at the door.

"Miss Cecil! by all that is unlucky!" exclaimed Mrs. Blonzely. "You must absolutely depart: for your meeting at this hour in the day would injure the reputation of my house."

"And the purity of my character," added Mr. Treville with affected irony. "Therefore," continued he, "I will make my retreat to the second floor; await Miss Cecil's entrance into this room, and escape with all possible expedition."

"You will be finely scandalized," said Mrs. Blonzely, "if Miss Cecil's carriage should be observed at the door when you depart."

Mr. Treville laughed. "Fear not the malice of the world," said he, "but depend upon my word, that the sanctity of my function will blunt the shafts of malevolence. Every man may be what he will, by seeming to be what he is not. It is only by candour and sincerity that

that we involve ourselves in difficulties with the censorious and severe. If we confess one fault, the world will attribute many to our account; but to be unsuspected, we must assume the appearance of perfection." So saying, he ascended to my apartment; and Mrs. Blonzely having been denied to Miss Cecil, soon after knocked at the *boudoir* door, to tell me that all was safe, and her visitors departed.

"I now trust," said she, "that you are convinced of my discretion; and I rely on your generosity not to refuse that, which I shall enforce, if you continue obstinate. Your fame and your person are in my hands: I have no time to trifle; sign the engagement, or expect the worst that can happen."

The insolent and menacing tone in which she spoke, convinced me that she was in earnest. My situation became every moment more and more irksome; the

the anxiety of my mind at the same time rendering me less capable of exerting my fortitude. Mrs. Blonzely had promised that, on my compliance, I should be at liberty to depart; and the horrors of my captivity, the fears that I should be for ever lost in the opinion of Lord Denmore, were he to know that I had flown to such an asylum, intimidated me to obey her injunctions. The note was signed, and I was immediately permitted to take my leave.

Thus escaped from the power of Mrs. Blonzely, I hastened along the street, without knowing whither I was going. I now recollected my rash conduct, in absenting myself from Lord Denmore's protection, before I had vindicated myself, or convinced him of his unjust determination to desert me. I pursued my way scarcely in my senses: my heart beat, and my cheek was burning

with the agitation of my mind. Every person I met, looked with astonishment at my wild and distracted appearance; but their remarks produced little effect upon my feelings; deep and disastrous sorrow filled my heart too amply, for any trifling event to awaken its attention. I was now abandoned to rely on an unfeeling world for support; to form new connections, to seek new friends. I had only to look forward with fear, or to perish with disgrace. I knew that I had little to expect from the broad circle of society: the exalted were too proud, the unfeeling too selfish, the ostentatious too arrogant, and the illiberal too severe, to afford me consolation. Alas, Frances! how dreadful is that woman's fate who is born to dependence; who is obliged to endure the insolence of scorn, or the overbearing pride of upstart insignificance. How wounding to the soul which is either
sustained

sustained by rectitude, or ennobled by genius, is that mental slavery which is obliged to resign its opinions to ignorance or folly. Envied must be the poorest peasant of the most barren soil, whose days are dedicated to labour, but whose will is free, when placed in competition with the most favoured or dependents. I sickened at the prospect before me! It must be brightened, or I must perish!

I soon found myself in Grosvenor-square, but the mental fatigue to which I had been exposed, with the want of rest and the fever which had been produced by anxiety, so far overcame my strength, that I fell upon the threshold of a door and fainted.

On recovering from my state of insensibility, I found myself in a concert-room full of company; while every individual was earnestly engaged in endeavouring to revive me. I seemed to
awake

awake as from a dream ; all objects appeared to my disordered fancy as mere visionary beings, till, to my infinite consternation, on glancing my eyes around the attentive group, I perceived Lord and Lady Melcomb, Sir Hector and Lady Upas, with many others, to whose persons I was an entire stranger. My situation was distressing in the extreme ; I endeavoured to rise, but I was still too feeble ; therefore placing my feverish hands before my eyes, I sunk upon the pillow of the sofa, not daring to encounter the inquisitive gaze of my surrounding attendants. The ambiguous and severe comments of some, and the kind assiduities of others, marked the various dispositions of the human heart ; while my cheek was flushed with confusion, and my mind was no less disordered, than my outward appearance.

I now

I now found that the house into which I had been conveyed, while in a state of insensibility, was Lord Melcomb's. The lovely Lady Upas assisted me to rise, and, with the most tender concern led me to an adjoining apartment, followed by Lady Melcomb, whose silence gave little promise of either sympathy or pity. The amiable delicacy with which Lady Upas expressed her anxiety for my situation, and my removal from the inquisitive gaze of those whom I had left in the concert-room, contributed to restore me. I thanked her; and having adjusted my dress, which had been deranged during my illness, I requested permission to take my leave.

Lady Upas, after a pause of some moments, during which she evidently wished to communicate something of importance, that weighed heavily on her mind,

mind, conjured me to consider what I was doing: to lose nothing of that rectitude which gave me every claim to protection from feeling minds; and to sustain my fortitude by the consciousness of innocence.

“ I am not one of the credulous, believe me,” said she, with a gentle smile. “ I draw my conclusions of guilt, from the character of the accuser. You seem to have no enemy but Emma Cecil; and I know her veracity too well, to condemn you upon its evidence. She is one of those busy restless spirits which roam abroad for mischief. Envy is her leading vice; and the propagation of scandal the favourite pleasure of her heart. In all societies she must be the prominent character. Her opinions are despotic; her manners overbearing; her temper violent; and her vanity insatiable. To these qualities she adds a volubility of speech, almost unequalled; and

and an arrogance of tone, that overrules what her affected eloquence cannot persuade: she is as false as she is cunning; as mean as she is arrogant; as vicious as she is vain; and as proud as she is malevolent. Shall a being of your order be stigmatized by a woman of this description?—Heaven forbid!”

I thanked her with a full heart, and again proposed going.

“Whither would you fly, my dear child?” said Lady Upas. “Stay, I conjure you, stay; and reflect that this despondency is unwarrantable. I have heard of Lord Denmore’s unkindness; and I am happy that fate has led you to a friend and an asylum.” I answered her with tears.

“For your conduct at Denmore Castle, when Sir Hector dared insult you by his abrupt and unauthorised proposals, I am bound to esteem you. He has since avowed his folly, and
professed

professed to feel sincerely penitent. You shall in your turn have cause to triumph over Emma Cecil; she shall feel and confess your superior virtues. Even the libertine Sir Hector shall be taught to respect you as my friend, and the protégée of Lord Denmore." At the conclusion of her words my bosom throbbed with agony.

"I am no longer honoured with that title," said I: "my fate is decided."

"You shall return with us to Hill-street; you shall be reconciled to your guardian; his mind is softened by affliction, and he will, he shall yet be convinced of your claims upon his kindness."

"Indeed I am innocent of every crime which calumny has invented to destroy me," said I. "If my indignant heart could not endure reproaches which it did not merit, Lord Denmore should

should respect its firmness, rather than condemn it: he should recollect that he taught me to be proud, by honouring me with his friendship; and he knows, if he will ask his heart, that I have never provoked either his resentment, or Lady Denmore's jealousy."

Lady Upas now took my hand, and, with a look of the deepest melancholy, inquired, "Do you not know that Lady Denmore is——?"

"What?" shrieked I, and falling on her arm.

"Dead!" sighed Lady Upas. "She expired not half an hour before we saw you."

My misery was now brought to a climax. I had not power to utter the sensations that thronged rapidly on my mind; all the bonds of nature were burst asunder, and I was wretched; I had no source of consolation; no hope that time would meliorate my anguish.

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Every

Every prospect of repose seemed to terminate at the tomb of Lady Denmore, and I gave myself up to ungovernable despair.

Lady Melcomb, who had witnessed the scene with evident *sang froid*, and who was as sceptical of my innocence, as she was astonished at Lady Upas's liberality, took her seat at the piano-forte, and began to play. I threw myself upon the sofa, and, nearly suffocated by my tears, anticipated all the sorrows which I was doomed to encounter ; Lord Denmore's hate, the world's suspicions, the Duchess of Aldborough's distress, the memory of the rash victim, and, Oh, Frances ! the pang of spurned affection !—more agonizing than guilt, more terrible than madness. I was now the most forlorn, the most hopeless of mortals ; for the completion of Lord Denmore's sorrows was the fiat of my despair.

As

As soon as I was capable of speaking, I again entreated Lady Upas to accept my thanks for her kindness, and to suffer me to depart. I pressed her hands, I bathed them with tears; for I had been so little accustomed to the sympathy of a gentle nature, that it seemed like the pity of a descended angel. She wished me to compose my spirits, and to accept an apartment at her house, till the first impression of grief should be effaced from Lord Denmore's mind. I heard her with grateful respect; but mine was a species of distraction which reason could not cure. I refused her kind and generous offer; and proposed, without hesitation, to throw myself at the feet of my guardian, to implore his friendship, and instantly to set off for Ireland.

Lady Upas, finding that I was determined in my plan of proceeding, requested that I would wait a few moments, and she would accompany me to Port-

man-square. I consented ; and in less than a quarter of an hour we hastened thither in her carriage ; her heart firmly prepared to sympathize, and mine palpitating with undescribable emotions.

Where shall I find language to delineate the conflicts of my soul, as I approached the house of mourning ? How shall I paint the wild distraction which possessed my mind, and which even the amiable consolations of Lady Upas could not tranquillize ? There is an extreme of grief which deadens the faculties, and, like a severe blow, benumbs that on which it is inflicted : but the hour which was to take from me the sense of misery, had not yet arrived. I looked forward to its approach with desperate courage, as the martyr beholds the kindling flame which is destined to consume him.

On the porter's opening the door, we were informed, that Lord Denmore had,

only a few minutes before, set out for the Castle. Lady Upas assisted me in descending from the carriage, and we were shown up stairs to the drawing-room, where we found Miss Cecil displaying all the outward semblance of ostentatious sorrow. At the sight of me she rose from her seat, and with a look of horror, blended with astonishment, inquired, what brought me thither? "Is it not sufficient," said she, "that you have been the cause of Lady Denmore's death; but you must insult her family, by daring to justify your conduct? The Duchess of Aldborough is mistress of this house; and in her name I command your instant departure."

"I will see the Duchess," said Lady Upas; "and Miss St. Leger shall be heard before she is condemned; I will then accompany her to Denmore Castle, where her guardian shall be her judge; for

for I know the envy of my own sex too well, to hope that, from your candour, she will receive her acquittal." Miss Cecil grew pale, and rung the bell. "Order my carriage," said she, as the servant entered the room: "I cannot remain under the same roof with Lord Denmore's mistress; even though she is protected by the kind and condescending Lady Upas."

Miss Cecil abruptly departed; and Lady Upas begged permission to speak with the Duchess of Aldborough. She was requested to attend in her chamber, and I was left alone in the drawing-room, to indulge those sorrows which now seemed incurable.

Every object around me augmented my distress; over the sofa hung Lady Denmore's picture. The screens which stood near the chimney were of her work. A small table placed in the middle of the room was covered with

scraps of paper, as if torn and recently scattered; I looked earnestly at them, and I discovered the hand-writing of Lord Denmore: my eyes were fascinated by an instinctive curiosity; and, in turning over the fragments, I perceived my own name in several places. I gathered the whole of the torn papers, and folding them in the cover of a letter, hastily secured them. By this time Lady Upas returned.

She informed me, that the Duchess would consent to see me in a few hours; that her regret was infinite, but that she imputed no blame to me. I was therefore requested to wait patiently till the evening. Lady Upas returned home to dinner, and I retired to my chamber.

My first thoughts were directed to the scraps of torn paper, which I had gathered from Lord Denmore's writing-table. With nice and laborious care I joined them on my toilet, and, after
near

near an hour's incessant attention, I read these lines :

“ I am wild with apprehension ; and if this letter should not find you speedily, my adored Gertrude, my fate will be decided. The weight of sorrow which now hangs about my heart, must break it ; I am no more the stern, the philosophic Denmore. Dearest Gertrude ! darling of my conscious, aching bosom ! I will no longer see thee driven to despair and frenzy ; but I will avow myself, in the face of God and man, thy——”

The precious morsel which should have terminated the short letter, was not to be found. I returned to the room which I had last quitted ; I searched every corner ; no relic remained to elucidate the concluding sentence. I could not restrain the tears that marked my disappointment ; my soul was agonized, my senses tortured by conjecture. I secured the precious, the important
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fragments in my pocket-book, and resigned myself to despair.

Adieu! I will reserve the conclusion of my letter for the next post.

LETTER XXVI.

The Same to the Same.

August 23, 1796.

EVENING advanced, and the encroachment of darkness threw an undescribable melancholy over the apartment. I had been more than three hours writing my last letter, when I received a message from the Duchefs, to attend her in her chamber. I followed her woman, till we reached the second floor; when she stopped abruptly, and pointing towards the door of the front room, with a sigh exclaimed, "Alas! there lies the corpse
of

of poor Lady Denmore!" I felt an impulse, which frequently pervades the human mind, to behold that which would agonize my senses. I looked at Mrs. Sewell with an inquiring solicitude. She understood the expression of my features; and, opening the door, we entered the chamber.

On the bed lay the once lovely Lady Denmore. Her countenance was serene; her features, though pale, not ghastly. Her night-cap was trimmed with a rose-coloured riband, which threw a faint reflection on her cheek through the thin laced border; and a smile was impressed on her fixed lip, which, even in death, seemed to mock the anguish of my bosom. I leaned on Mrs. Sewell's arm. She wept violently; but my sorrow had exhausted the source of tears, and I looked intently on the object before me without the smallest visible emotion.

I touched her hand; it was cold, but not deathly; the arm listless; the bed-clothes still covered the body; and she seemed rather sleeping than dead.

“My Lady was beautiful,” said Mrs. Sewell, with a deep sigh.

“Was!” exclaimed I. “Oh! she is still beautiful: her serenity of countenance proves that the soul, emancipated, is now happy.”

“My Lady was of a jealous temper,” said Mrs. Sewell, “and apt to be too hasty. But I am sure my Lord loved her better than his life. For when Miss Cecil told him that my Lady was dead, he fell senseless on the carpet; and then Miss Cecil endeavoured to persuade him, that my Lady was out of her senses; and she said something about Mr. Treville, my Lord’s friend, whom he consults on all occasions.” I was
rapt

rapt in a mournful reverie, when Mrs. Sewell, catching my arm hastily, reminded me that the Duchefs was waiting to receive me.

"One moment more," said I, "and we will attend her. Did Lord Denmore mention my name after the death of this rash victim?"

"O yes, several times," answered Mrs. Sewell; "and he begged the Duchefs, if you should return, to receive and to protect you. He shed tears when he talked about you, and said he would give a thousand guineas, to be assured that you were safe."

"Generous! generous angel!" exclaimed I. "Did he talk of returning to London?"

"Yes, as soon as the funeral is over, my Lord will certainly be here," replied Mrs. Sewell. "He said that he should not rest satisfied till you were found; and that no power on earth should screen

from his vengeance, any person who had done you wrong."

The twilight was so far advanced, that every object became obscured; and a thrilling horror chilled my bosom as I walked slow' round the bed, where I could faintly distinguish the form of Lady Denmore. Mrs. Sewell was little more courageous than myself. Her arm, which I held within mine, trembled; and she closed the door after us, as if fearful of the sound which it would occasion. We passed through Lady Denmore's dressing-room, beyond which was the Duchess's chamber; two lights stood on a table near the bed. As soon as I beheld the amiable woman, supported by pillows, with a book of devotion open before her, I fell upon my knees, and hid my face in the curtains: she desired me to rise, and to be composed. "There is a divine power," said she, raising her languid eyes,

eyes, "who will support the innocent: who has given me fortitude in the moment of trial, and to whom all hearts are open. If you are guiltless, my child, you will conquer your despair!" I could only answer, "I *am* guiltless."

I rose from the ground, and seating myself on the side of the bed, took the hand of this excellent woman, which I pressed to my feverish forehead. "Alas! Gertrude, I pity you!" said the Duchess. "You have drawn upon yourself a stigma which, perhaps, you do not merit. Where have you been, and why did you quit the protection of Lord Denmore?" I was preparing to explain my conduct, when she interrupted me. "This is not the time for an *ecclaircissement*," said she; "only assure me that you have not disgraced yourself by any indiscreet action, and I will await a less melancholy hour for your exculpation." My solemn

assurance that I was innocent of any impropriety, and my return under the protection of Lady Upas, satisfied her mind; and the subject was deferred for a future conversation.

I remained with the Duchess. She continued religiously resigned to the misfortune which had deprived her of an only child; but her serenity was marked by a silent sensibility, which all her fortitude could not conceal. She frequently dropped a tear upon her book of devotion, and paused to sigh, while she implored Heaven for strength to bear its dispensations patiently. The purity of her life divested the closing hour of all its terrors; and though sixty-four years had passed since she first breathed in a world of sorrow, though sickness had wearied every sense during a tedious period of time, her strength of mind was not impaired; and her unaffected piety sustained its faculties, even

even in the winter of her days, with all the lustre of youth, and all the graceful meekness of conscious rectitude.

It was past two o'clock, when Mrs. Sewell retired to rest, by order of the Duchess, who requested that I would continue with her another hour. "I have a task for you to perform," said she, "a sacred task, which I would not confide to any other being." I bowed a silent assent, and she continued:

"Gertrude, I rely on your prudence; I depend on your fidelity. You must promise me that you will fulfil my commands."

"Most readily," said I. "Dispose of me as you think proper; I am bound to obey you."

"Then," said the Duchess, "take these keys; in my daughter's chamber you will find a writing-table; it has
 14 several

several small drawers." I began to shudder. "Open them all, and bring me every paper, and whatever you may find in them, without delay."

"In Lady Denmore's chamber?" said I, faintly.

"In the recess beyond her bed. Before she expired, she requested that I would, immediately after her death, open the papers I mention; and when I had rescued your name from every imputation, consign them to eternal oblivion." She held forth her hand; I took the keys, but I shivered with terror.

"Will not to-morrow be sufficiently early for such an inspection?" said I.

"To-morrow, Gertrude, I may be with my child in Heaven!" said the Duchess, with a saint-like smile. "Go, and obey my orders. I am impatient to fulfil the request of my dear lost girl: I am also anxious to see you reinstated

reinstated in Lord Denmore's favour."

This idea fortified my bosom; and a reviving courage seemed to rush through my heart almost instantaneously. I took one of the lights, and without uttering a syllable, quitted the chamber.

On entering Lady Denmore's dressing-room, I felt a thrilling horror, which seemed to forbid my proceeding any farther. On one side stood her harp; on the other, her toilette-table. Her drawings and various works of fancy decorated the hangings. The long glass, at which she always finished dressing, was before me; I beheld my own features, to which the light that I carried gave an additional paleness; I stood as though my feet were rooted to the ground; the house was as silent as the grave, and my blood seemed to freeze with the terrors which assailed me.

I remained

I remained fixed and scarcely daring to breathe during several minutes. My light was sinking in the socket, and the quivering flame threatened every moment to leave me in total darkness. Ashamed of my weakness, and recollecting the promise which I had made to the Duchess, I ventured to open the door of Lady Denmore's chamber. I entered. The shutters were unclosed, and the pale dawn light penetrated the blue curtains, throwing a ghastly tint over the countenance, which now met my eyes more pale than ever.

The task imposed on me at this moment seemed impracticable. I could not pry into that sacred repository, which seemed guarded by the inanimate form of its departed owner. I stole round the bed. I raised my hand towards the first drawer; I fixed the key; but had my life been the forfeit
of

of my disobedience, I would have perished rather than have turned it.

My fingers seemed to freeze as I held the keys with a trembling hand; and my heart beat so violently, that I fancied I could hear the pulsation, when a large string of Lady Denmore's harp suddenly broke. The vibration smote my brain; my hand fell from the keys, and a deep sigh instantly followed. From whence it came, I knew not. I looked wildly, yet deliberately, round the chamber; nothing living except myself seemed present. The flame, which had long quivered in the socket, was suddenly extinguished; — and I rushed, impelled by the terrors of my situation, towards the window.

On drawing back the curtain I found that day was sufficiently advanced to render every object distinctly visible. Again a laboured sigh was heard; I had not power to move, but turning my
eyes

eyes towards the bed, I beheld Lady Denmore looking stedfastly at me. I shrieked, and fell on the floor. Mrs. Sewell, who was not yet asleep, soon came to my assistance. She raised me in her arms, and placing me on a chair, inquired the cause of my sudden and increased agitation. I pointed towards the bed; where,—oh, Frances! how shall I describe it?—where the extended arm of Lady Denmore convinced me that she was still living. Her quivering lips in vain attempted utterance; I snatched her to my bosom; I bathed her forehead with my tears. Oh, what a moment did I then experience! how nearly did my joy approach to torture; every vein seemed to throb with ecstasy, every limb was convulsed and trembling.

I quitted Lady Denmore, and flew to the Duchess's chamber. "She lives!" exclaimed I; "she lives to bless you!"

you!"—"Whom?" cried the angelic woman.

"Your daughter! your beloved Lady Denmore!" The Duchess feebly shrieked, and sunk upon her pillow. I now rung the bell with violence; the servants hastened in all directions to the chamber; and in a few minutes we beheld the amiable Duchess in the arms of her reviving daughter, blessing and blest beyond the powers of utterance.

I now found that the female servants, who had been ordered to sit up in Lady Denmore's chamber, had disobeyed the Duchess's commands, and each retired to rest. The deep sleep, which bore so strong a resemblance to death, had been produced merely by the exhausted state of Lady Denmore's nerves, and the lingering torpor which still enervated her frame. She awoke considerably
strength-

strengthened by her long slumber; and her physician, who was immediately sent for, now entertained the most flattering hopes of her perfect recovery. The appearance of annihilation was the crisis of her danger: had she not slept, a very few hours would have closed her eyes for ever.

The joyful intelligence being now dispatched to Lord Denmore, the Duchess earnestly entreated that I would endeavour to take some rest. My faculties were wearied almost to insensibility; and a parching fever seemed every moment increasing. I again embraced the Duchess; I again pressed Lady Denmore to my heart; and it was not till near nine o'clock that I retired to my apartment.

I had scarcely begun to undress, when Mrs. Sewell abruptly entered the room, with a letter that moment arrived by express

express from Lord Denmore. It was directed to me : I opened it hastily, and read the following contents :

“ My beloved Gertrude !

“ I trust that, before this reaches Portman-square, you will be safely restored to the Duchess of Aldborough's protection. I also feel confident that you have been, during your absence, the guardian of that honour, which you are too proud to resign, and which I am too generous to suspect.

“ The death of Lady Denmore will hasten an event of infinite importance, with which your fortune and my future happiness are intimately connected. There is now no plea for procrastination ; the affection which I feel for you shall shortly be avowed ; and the world shall be taught to confess, that you were formed to embellish the situation

tion in which I am now determined to place you.

“The sorrow which I feel for the loss of Lady Denmore, is infinite; and the decencies of life will never be violated by those who are actuated by reason, or alive to sensibility. The bonds which unite society are seldom broken, except by those who are dead alike to shame and to humanity. I loved Lady Denmore most tenderly; and had she lived, her peace of mind might have been restored, though your elevation would have been retarded. But the hour approaches, when justice towards you shall be exemplified, even amidst the keen regrets that agonize my bosom.

“As soon as the awful moment is past, which consigns my dearest Harriet to the tomb, I shall return to London; and in your society, my beloved Gertrude,

trude, I shall hope to find that happiness, which all the senseless crowds of the giddy and the gay would never teach me to experience.

“How, in this moment of solitary grief, do I sigh for such a companion! You cannot be a stranger to my feelings: your penetration must long since have discovered, in every action of my life, more than an ordinary interest and affection. Yes, Gertrude, you are dearer to me, than fortune or honour. I exist but in the hope of rendering you happy, and of proving myself worthy of the title which I covet.

“Console the amiable Duchess with your attentions. She is one of those rare mortals whom prejudice cannot lead from the practice of humanity. The virtues of her own mind teach her to judge with lenity, and to feel with sensibility for the faults of others. She knows that human nature is frail; and she

she looks round upon the busy world with the philosophy of virtue.

“Dearest Gertrude, farewell! Do not attempt an explanation of your conduct. I trust to your affection; I rely upon your prudence; and I condemn my own fullen taciturnity, for having wounded the one, or been sceptical of the other.

“I write this letter on my journey; and I dispatch my servant, with orders to bring me your answer as speedily as possible. Embrace the good and venerable woman, who has now no hope but in the consciousness of her own unexampled virtues. Embrace her for your affectionate, but afflicted

“DENMORE.”

I returned to the chamber, where I had left the Duchess with Lady Denmore. The paper still trembled in my hand; and, for the first moment in my life,

life, I felt myself guilty. I shuddered with compunction; and though I had not cunning to conceal the letter, I wanted courage to avow my having received it. I had scarcely been in the room two minutes when the physician returned: I again retired, and hastening to my chamber, read, and re-read the incomprehensible enigma. I could only interpret its contents in one way; and that interpretation filled my bosom with conflicts of the most perplexing nature. What a part am I compelled to act! said I. How can I appear to rejoice at Lady Denmore's recovery, while I conceal in my bosom an avowal of affection from her husband? The bond of domestic confidence will again unite them; but will not my presence endanger its permanency? Will not Lady Denmore again question the sincerity of his promises? and shall not I expose myself to a new series of insult

and suspicion? I would fly from the scene of danger; but whither can I hope for safety. I am thrown upon a sea of troubles, and I am fated to be wretched. Shall I meet the storm like a stoic, and endeavour to place the shield of apathy before my heart? or shall I, like a maniac, relinquish all the energies of reason, spurn all the dictates of religion, and rush forward to despair?

I feel that my hour is not yet come. I must again behold the lofty towers of Denmore Castle; for there, Frances, it is *there*, that I shall find repose!

LETTER XXVI.

The Same to the Same.

August 28, 1796.

THE change of scene, which Lady Denmore's recovery occasioned, may be easily imagined. The express which had been dispatched to my guardian, was expected to reach him in a few hours; and the distance from London being only forty miles, his arrival was hoped for before midnight.

I passed the remainder of the day in various ruminations. I sincerely rejoiced in Lady Denmore's recovery; and yet a gloom hung over my senses, which weighed them down almost to despondency. I read the letter which I had received; I weighed every syllable in the scale of reflection, and still I found

the attachment of my heart preponderate, when placed in competition with the efforts of reason. The image of Lord Denmore was too deeply impressed upon my imagination, to be effaced by any mortal event; while the remembrance of his virtues seemed to sanction the fatal partiality.

I often ask myself, why a being whom I am bound by gratitude only to revere, so tenderly interests my feelings? and yet this question rushes through my heart whenever I hear his voice, or reflect on the generosity of his conduct. I do not pretend to deny that Lord Denmore has faults; that he is at times stern and impetuous; but I leave the cynic to examine the human heart with a microscopic eye. Reason is content to know, that man is gifted with the frailty of his kind; and Philosophy must deign to pity, what even Reason cannot conquer.

At

At the close of evening Lord Denmore arrived. I heard his chaise stop at the door, and rose to quit the chamber, where I was sitting near Lady Denmore's pillow. A sudden palpitation convinced me that my bosom's inquietude was considerably augmented by the letter which I had received, and by the rapid approach of time towards that crisis which was destined to decide my fate. For I had strongly determined, in my own mind, to separate myself for ever from that object for whom I never could avow my affection, and with whom I could not exist in a state of indifference. I knew not in what scale to estimate the weight of his professions; that he felt more than an ordinary esteem for me might easily be believed, because he could have no interest in dissimbling. That he loved Lady Denmore was unquestionable; his sorrow, his regret, the pity which induced him

to pardon her rash elopement, the assiduity of his attentions while she was in danger; all conspired to prove, that she was the object of his tenderest attachment. Yet he had professed a fondness for me that was unaccountable: he had declared his intention, had Lady Denmore been dead, of placing me in a situation in which I should have been the partner of his society and fortune. All this is enigmatical; and Time, the unraveller of earthly events, can alone develop the mystery of his conduct.

At a moment so important, when I longed, yet dreaded, to meet Lord Denmore; when my eyes glistened with tears of solicitude and joy, and my cheeks glowed with the flush of self-reproach; I heard my guardian enter the house. I looked at the pale countenance of Lady Denmore; her languid eyes, her lips entirely colourless; I heard her husband's voice speaking
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ing to his servant, as he ascended the stairs. I rushed from the room, to avoid his presence, now become more dangerous than ever.

At the door I met the only object on earth, whom at that moment I dreaded to encounter. His mien was wild and agitated: I endeavoured to pass him; but my eyes received the expressive glance of his, while he snatched my hand, and shook it with gentle affection. I could scarcely support my exhausted frame; he observed the conflicts struggling in my mind, and endeavoured to speak; but his articulation failed, and he hurried into the chamber.

I had only proceeded up three or four stairs, when I as suddenly descended. I longed to witness a scene the most touching that imagination can conceive. I stood unwilling to depart, yet not daring to return to Lady Denmore's apartment. I knew at that moment,

that my guardian was kneeling by the pillow of his wife, and bathing her pale cheek with tears of joy and reconciliation. I could have wept, Frances; I could have mourned, when every other heart was overflowing with ecstasy. I returned to my chamber, where I dedicate that hour to you, which would perhaps be devoted to ruminations less tranquil than those which friendship will inspire.

In vain I endeavour to analyze my feelings: they are complicated even to the verge of insanity; as such I confide them to your sympathy; I feel their burden lightened by your participation, though I seek in vain for consolation from the powers of reason. A dreadful timidity seems to augment the perils that await my repose; and yet, guiltless as I am, what have I to shrink from? Alas, Frances! with all the boasted pride, with all the stern and rigid sense
of

of virtue which guards my heart; when I meet the dark and penetrating eyes of Lord Denmore, I become as it were *nothing*.

I shall count the moments with impatience, till I find an opportunity of conversing with my guardian. How brave is woman, when she anticipates the triumphs of her heart; how very a coward when that heart is vanquished! Yet I only wish to acquit myself. To whom?—Can Lord Denmore suppose me culpable? Can he, knowing the purity of my thoughts, condemn them? Yet I have much to explain; perhaps he misinterprets the meaning of the sentiment which fills my mind. The *sensation*—sentiment, is a cold unmeaning word; it wants energy to express the feelings of my bosom!—Adieu.

LETTER XXVII.

The Same to the Same.

September 4, 1796.

I HAVE been confined to my chamber ever since I wrote my last letter. A considerable degree of fever required a physician's aid, and I am now somewhat recovered. Lord Denmore never failed to make almost hourly inquiries; and the Duchess of Aldborough divided her time betwixt me and her daughter. Her solicitude was exemplified in every word and every action; I have explained the cause of my withdrawing myself from her house; and assured her, that, in a private lodging, I passed my short absence, free from molestation. She questioned me no farther; and I had not resolution to avow that I
had

had been the dupe of Mrs. Blonzely's artifice.

Miss Cecil has left town for Bright-helmstone. Lady Upas has been commanded to attend Sir Hector thither for the benefit of bathing. The nabob annually visits that delightful spot, where his profuse splendour excites both astonishment and envy. Lady Denmore's physician recommends the sea-coast for her residence, during the remainder of the autumn, and most probably she will remove thither, as soon as she has strength to undertake the journey. Nothing interesting or new has occurred since I dispatched my last letter, excepting the rapid recovery of Lady Denmore, and the consequent restoration of tranquillity in every bosom which felt and lamented her danger. My guardian was informed of her supposed death by Miss Cecil, who also communicated the dreadful tidings to the Duchess of

Aldborough. Neither the one nor the other had resolution to behold their darling object lifeless; and the exhausted sufferer was consigned to the care of her domestic attendants, who, concluding that her profound sleep was the stagnation of death, had left her entirely alone, till the period of my entering her chamber. Fortunately, the barbarian custom of stripping and stretching the still warm remains of the deceased, was omitted; otherwise the quivering flame of life, before it could have been strongly rekindled, would, for want of proper aid, have been speedily and irrecoverably extinguished. Thus have I been the means of preserving a life which is necessary to Lord Denmore's happiness. The idea fills my mind with a sensation of delight, which even its wayward wanderings cannot diminish: and if the event does not restore the charm of domestic happiness,

I trust Lord Denmore will recollect, that to promote his felicity I have sacrificed my own. He cannot but be grateful.—Frances, farewell.

LETTER XXVIII.

The Same to the Same.

Brighthelmstone, Sept. 8, 1796.

YESTERDAY, after a delightful journey, we arrived at this place, and are now lodged on the Steine, the most fashionable spot on the habitable globe: our party consists of the Duchess of Aldborough, Lady Denmore, my guardian, and myself. We all came in the same carriage; every bosom seemed animated with new health and spirits.

Lady Denmore is still in too feeble a state to enter into the amusements of
a wa-

a watering-place; but the Duchess has promised to accompany me wherever I wish to go, and, at the particular request of Lord Denmore, we purpose visiting the rooms this evening.

We have passed the whole morning in the *routine* of occupations which here it is both healthful and fashionable to follow: such as bathing, strolling on the Steine, crowding to the libraries, driving on the downs, and idling time away in the busy avocation of doing nothing. But example is every thing; and that which the leaders of refined taste zealously adopt, the followers of folly will not fail to imitate. Hence we behold one sex, recently emerged from the salt waves, scorching in the morning sun for the embellishment of beauty; and the other, riding races in the full blaze of noon, or wasting the midnight hour at a gaming-table, for the benefit of the constitution! For this purpose
the

the sober cit quits the dull toil of commerce, and exhibits his wealth in proportion to the follies of his family. The emaciated libertine, and the lisping coquette, labour through the day in a perpetual round of fatigue, in order to repair the ravages of dissipation, or to shake off the languor of a nervous fever. Thus, by the powerful force of example, toil becomes a pleasure, and reason is sacrificed to the supremacy of custom: the wise condemn even that which they countenance; and the senseless eagerly pursue the footsteps of Fancy, because she has Fashion for her guide, and Folly for her companion.

Lord Denmore is wearied to satiety with every thing he hears and sees in this vortex of unmeaning pleasures; the trifling gabble of a morning lounge, and the ceremonious stupidity of an evening assembly, are ill-suited to an intelligent contemplative mind. He
has

has more than once remarked, that here every man of sense seems flying from himself; assuming a character foreign to his nature; and, as if ashamed of being a rational creature, aping the eccentricities of those sophisticated mortals, whom his sober reason cannot fail to execrate.

I have not yet seen either Sir Hector or Miss Cecil; neither having left even the inquiries of civility at Lady Denmore's door since her arrival. Lady Upas is confined to her chamber; and I would make her a visit, were it not for fear of meeting the eastern dragon, who guards a jewel which he knows not how to value.

I am told that no person in this scene of refined pleasure moves with such splendid *éclat* as Sir Hector Upas. Three houses are engaged every year for the nabob and his *suite*. Two cooks, four summer carriages, twelve horses, a cutter,

cutter, a pack of hounds, twenty servants, and a wife, complete the sum total of his ostentatious establishment. Yet you will smile when I tell you, that by order of his physician Sir Hector lives on a vegetable diet; confines himself to two apartments in the southern aspect; is prevented the use of light carriages, on account of his excessive corpulency; has an invincible antipathy to salt-water, having once nearly perished in a storm on his passage from India. Never having been accustomed to equestrian exercises, he is a timid horseman, suffers only one Indian domestic to approach his person, and seldom sees his wife in the whole *routine* of the four-and-twenty hours.

“So moves the sumpter-mule in harness’d pride,
“That bears the treasure which he cannot taste*!”

* Smollet’s “Ode to Independence.”

I have already observed that the inhabitants of this place are obliging beyond any that I have ever met with. They chiefly consist of shopkeepers and fishermen; the former are civil and intelligent; the latter attentive and honest, though rough as the rude waves on which they toil. With this outline before me, I trust that I shall, during my residence here, be furnished with materials for a few interesting sketches; they will draw my mind from its sorrows; and you will value them for the magic they will possess, though in that instance only.—Adieu.

LETTER XXIX.

The Same to the Same.

Brighthelmstone, Sept. 10, 1796.

Soon after I had written my last letter, the servant announced a mantua-maker, who had brought some fashionable articles for inspection. My guardian was writing in the drawing-room, where the Duchefs and Lady Denmore were engaged in conversation with the master of the ceremonies and Mr. Treville. I immediately joined them, and on entering the room, to my infinite confusion, recognized beneath her thrice-feathered hat the fashionable and insinuating Mrs. Blonzely. Our consternation was mutual. The variety of fanciful dresses which she had displayed on every chair in the
apartment,

apartment, afforded me an opportunity to conceal my face, by turning towards and examining them successively. Mrs. Blonzely soon recovered her accommodating *nonchalance*, and with an incessant volubility, selected, described, praised, and recommended the *tout ensemble* of her fantastic assortment.

“ This morning robe,” said she, “ was invented by the Countess of Anclefort. The sleeves are beautifully fanciful, and the shape of the body produces an astonishing effect on figures of a certain age. Not three years since, her Ladyship was mistaken by Mr. Treville for one of her daughters—charming young women, full of spirit and vivacity ! They buy every thing they wear at my house ; they have the most perfect confidence in my judgment.” This observation was accompanied by a significant glance at me. I blushed—and she continued :

“ The

“The Countess never wears a morning-dress that costs less than thirty guineas. She has an exquisite taste ! But experience will accomplish every thing ; and you know her Ladyship has been the arbitress of fashion at least these five-and-twenty years.” She paused, placed the chemise before her, looked towards the glass, then at the company. “You cannot conceive how much it takes from the appearance of corpulency. Pray, suffer me to leave it ?” continued Mrs. Blonzely, addressing the Duchess. A smile of denial silenced her for a moment ; but rallying from the effect of her disappointment, she soon recovered the use of her voice ; and a silver muslin robe was the next subject of commendation.

“This beautiful, this charming caprice would exactly suit the young Lady,” said she : “the Grecian form should have the Grecian drapery ; though
we

we sometimes see the fat Miss Grampus, at Ranelagh, wrapped in a transparent robe, which scarcely conceals the exuberance of her beauty ; while the lank, boney Marchioness of Hoicksem frisks round the rotunda, in all the rustic simplicity of a French *payfanne*. Pray, did your Grace see Mrs. Tabbinet's black wig last Saturday at the Opera ? Nothing was ever more ridiculous ! The dark curls hung over her snowy eyebrows, like a black cloud over the crags of *Mont Blanc*." Mr. Treville laughed vehemently. The Duchess, Lord and Lady Denmore, and myself, were disgusted and silent.

" But that was not so comical," continued Mrs. Blonzely, " as the Duchess of Simple's flaxen tresses, contrasting her sombre features like the light and shadow of a crayon night-piece ; her two grey eyes gleaming like moons through the silver clouds which floated round

round her temples. Has your Grace, or my Lady, seen Mr. Vivid's excellent caricature of the two metamorphoses? Every body buys them; and I question if the originals have a friend in the world, who is not delighted with their ridiculous resemblance."

"I perceive," said I significantly, "that women of the highest rank have the *honour* to call you *friend*."

Mrs. Blonzely was preparing a sneer, which she converted into a smile with a degree of address that was astonishing. I now observed a folded paper falling from a roll of blue silk which lay on one of the chairs. I picked it up unseen by Mrs. Blonzely, and concealed it; concluding that it was my extorted note, which in a moment of conscious reproof she had resolved to restore.

Lord Denmore, becoming weary of Mrs. Blonzely's familiar loquacity, now begged leave to present me the silver
muffin

muslin dress, which had excited no small degree of panegyric from all parties. "It would exactly suit Miss St. Leger's fine form," said my guardian; "and she must positively have it." Mr. Treville looked earnestly at Lady Denmore, with a meaning as mischievous as it was refined. Twelve guineas was the sum paid for the dress; and Lord Denmore presented it to me with an engaging diffidence, which rendered his gift doubly acceptable.

At this moment Miss Cecil burst into the room, with a helmet that would have suited the head of a light-horseman, and a scarlet habit, which made the meridian sun look cold with envy.

Her first glance was at me; and it was such a one as would have characterised the genius of malevolence: but her look was like the lightning; it was transient, though armed for destruction. I met the meaning which it conveyed,
with

with a serene contempt; she softened her features into a smile, as she passed Mrs. Blonzely; and addressing Lady Denmore, congratulated her on her recovery.

“I have heard of the same cause producing a malady and its cure,” said she. “The danger, thank Heaven! is past: the good you have still within your reach; for I perceive you are never without the poison and its antidote. But, for my part, I should be fearful of making a second experiment, remembering how near the first was proving fatal.”

This sarcastic remark the whisperer Conscience divided between Mr. Treville and myself. Miss Cecil aimed it obliquely, and the effect was equally felt by both, Though Lord Denmore considered it as exclusively meant for me, the Duchess well knew, that the Divine was the person who claimed its justice. Mrs.

Blonzely half smiled, as she adjusted her merchandize; and with an impertinent menace of her eye, often looked me into silence. I watched her attentively, till she came to the roll of blue silk, from which the paper had dropped. She opened it with a fluttering emotion; her cheek reddened, her hand trembled. She searched her boxes, and researched them: all her pains proved useless; the precious paper was in my possession; and I was resolved, at all hazards, not to restore it.

I now perceived, for my eyes assumed the vigilance of Argus, that Miss Cecil looked significantly at Mr. Treville, then at Mrs. Blonzely. There was a tacit intelligence between them, that had something of importance in it. I began to anticipate a new chapter of discoveries; and I confess, that the idea of retaliation made my little heart throb with impatience.

Mrs.

Mrs. Blonzely, with many signs and counter-signs from the commanding eyes of Miss Cecil, departed. Mr. Treville soon after took his leave with a ceremonious frigidity, which piqued Miss Cecil almost beyond her patience. As he closed the door after him, I heard her mutter with acrimonious resentment, "Supercilious puppy!" then turning towards Lady Denmore, she continued, "I am really astonished, that any rational woman can think favourably of such a coxcomb!" Lady Denmore's pale cheek was faintly coloured with a blush, which she could not repel; and the angry Miss Cecil stepped into the balcony, to watch the 'dear perfidious!' across the Steine, and to conceal the mortification which his neglect had occasioned.

I too had my anxious perturbations; but they originated in a far different cause. My eyes also followed Mr.

Treville, but it was to watch whether he overtook Mrs. Blonzely. As I suspected, the master of *finesse* entered into close conversation with his *aid-de-cœur*, and they soon after quitted the Steine together.

The clouds which had hung over the planet Venus now dissipated; and the absence of the Divine constellation, with his feathered Mercury, seemed to promise a change in the whole system of things. The Duchess of Aldborough, whose mind is fraught with sincerity, remarked that she thought Mrs. Blonzely the most arrogant and disgusting mortal she had ever met with. "But," continued she, "it is the young women of fashion who spoil her by their familiar confidence."

"Do you mean that for me?" drawled Miss Cecil, as she adjusted her helmet before the glass.

"I mean

"I mean it for all who encourage insolence, while modest merit is so shamefully neglected," replied the Duchess.

"I am precisely of your Grace's opinion," said Lord Denmore.

"What merit can a woman in her situation evince beyond that of obliging her friends?" said Miss Cecil. "She is the most intelligent creature in the world."

"At arranging an intrigue, or entrapping the unwary," interrupted the Duchess.

"She is a woman of infinite genius," added Miss Cecil.

"A jade!" exclaimed Lord Denmore laconically: "a very jade!"

"Were you never invited to one of her *déjeûnés*," inquired Miss Cecil, with pointed sarcasm.

"Never," replied Lord Denmore firmly.

"Nor *you*, Miss St. Leger?" continued the female inquisitor. I made no answer.

"Well!" continued Miss Cecil: "no one can say that I am fastidious; but you unfashionable misses have a most extraordinary share of effrontery, and can deny a matter of fact as bravely as the most accomplished courtier."

"I am fully persuaded that Miss St. Leger is a total stranger to Mrs. Blonzely," cried Lord Denmore.

"I could almost swear it," added the Duchess. "The purity of her mind would shrink from such an associate."

"Nobody can say that I am fond of calumny, but I will bet you fifty guineas," said Miss Cecil, addressing Lord Denmore, "that Miss St. Leger, the artless, the innocent Miss St. Leger, has

has been at the *déjeûné* of Mrs. Blonzely; and that at the very moment when her friend Lady Denmore was supposed to be dying."

"Ridiculous!" exclaimed Lord Denmore.

"Many things are ridiculous, that are perfectly within the pale of probability," said Miss Cecil: "and this happens to be indubitable."

I thought that I should sink to the ground; when Lord Denmore, taking my hand, with an earnest and inquiring look, demanded, "Is this true, Gertrude?"

"It is, my Lord," said I.

"In the house of Mrs. Blonzely! at her *déjeûné*! when my wife was in danger!" repeated Lord Denmore. "For what purpose?"

"To seek an asylum, my Lord, when I was driven from your protection," answered I firmly.

"Rather say, when you were prompted to absent yourself by a rash despair," interrupted Lord Denmore. "Unworthy girl! how long did you remain under Mrs. Blonzely's roof?"

"One night, my Lord."

"Infamous degradation!" exclaimed my guardian. "In this wide world, could you find no honourable retreat for twelve short hours? Gertrude, I have done with you. I resign my dominion over your conduct: I banish you for ever from my heart, nay even from my presence." He was quitting the room, when the Duchess snatched his hand.

"You shall not go," said she: "you shall not sacrifice the peace of innocence to gratify the malice of an envious woman."

"Let go my arm, Madam," cried my guardian.

"Oh, my Lord! hear me," said I, taking his other hand; "I can exculpate myself

myself from every shadow of guilt. I was driven by necessity to that detested habitation; the remembrance of it has been a sufficient punishment."

"Were you alone?—did no other visitor come there, during your disgraceful concealment?—Speak!" said Lord Denmore; "do not deceive me; for I will know the truth, or I will annihilate the forceress."

"Be patient, my dear Lord," cried the Duchess, trembling and pale. Miss Cecil took off her helmet, and replaced her feather with the most affected indifference, though a conscious pleasure seemed to smile upon her cheek and glisten in her eyes.

"Gertrude," continued Lord Denmore, "is it thus you repay my confidence,—my esteem,—my affection?" I sunk with my forehead on his arm, while the Duchess took my hand and pressed it. Lady Denmore's counte-

nance began to change ; she seemed uneasy, but forbore to interfere, either by word or action.

“ Answer me one question,” said my guardian ; “ were any other visitors in the house while you remained there ? ”

“ Yes, my Lord.”

“ Who were they ? ” cried Lord Denmore with augmented emotion.

Without the smallest hesitation I replied, “ Sir Hector Upas.”

Lord Denmore threw himself upon the sofa, and hid his face upon the pillow ; Miss Cecil hummed a tune ; the Duchess gently let go my hand, and a profound silence followed. After a pause of some minutes, I once more ventured to address my guardian.

“ Yet, hear my story,” cried I, bursting into tears : “ I only solicit to be heard for a few moments.”

“ I have heard enough,” answered he. “ I know Sir Hector Upas ; the
licentious

licentious dotard ! the incorrigible libertine ! I know him well. And he shall answer to me for the infamy of his machinations."

"If you quarrel with all Miss St. Leger's lovers, you will have enough to do," cried Miss Cecil, taking up a book and glancing her eyes over the title-page. "Nobody ever said that I was envious, but a young Lady of more universal attractions I never met with."

"Lovers!—are there more?" said Lord Denmore, roused from his silent agitation, and rising from the sofa.

"Did the convenient minion make your dishonours public? Did she blazon your frailty to the whole phalanx of her licentious employers? Whom, besides the pernicious Upas, witnessed the degradation, the infernal degradation?"

"None, my Lord! for I was not degraded, except by my distress; and

if there be dishonour either in my poverty or my dependent situation, that dishonour is not mine. Sir Hector Upas came not on my account to Mrs. Blonzely's: he sought an higher conquest, a more enchanting mortal. One whose rank will prove a safeguard for *her* reputation, while *I* am the victim of her malignant slanders." Miss Cecil's face became first crimson, and then pale. Lord Denmore listened earnestly, and I, concluding that I had my enemy completely in my power, continued:

"I request, my Lord, that Mrs. Blonzely may be sent for; she will acquit me; vile and unblushing as you describe her, she will be terrified into a confession of truth, when she beholds the deformity of falsehood." I looked at Miss Cecil as though my soul spoke through my eyes. She hung her head, and

and twisted her glove, while I heard her teeth grinding those words which her cowardice did not dare to utter.

At this moment Mrs. Blonzely came tripping across the Steine. I flew to the balcony, and beckoned her towards the house. With a ready alacrity she hastened to obey the summons, and soon after entered the drawing-room. On her appearance all the party surrounded her. She looked bewildered, first at one, then at another, till Miss Cecil with an affected dignity commanded silence, and thus addressed her:

“An unpleasant discovery has been made; and it remains with you alone to elucidate that part of it which still appears ambiguous. Did Miss St. Leger, or did she not, sleep at your house a short time since?”

“She did,” replied Mrs. Blonzely.

“And did she not meet a person there of no inconsiderable notoriety.”

“Unques-

"Unquestionably," was the answer. Miss Cecil's triumph nearly overpowered her; she gasped, and with a malicious smile, continued:

"Notwithstanding the known sincerity of my nature, my word is doubted: you have therefore now only to name the person."

Mrs. Blonzely shook her head, and hesitatingly replied, "You must pardon me."

"Nay, madam, no prevarication," said Lord Denmore: "no searching for a subterfuge; I am not disposed to trifle; therefore be brief. I insist that, without disguise or hesitation, you name the person." She continued mute.

"Was it Sir Hector Upas?" said the Duchess impatiently.

Mrs. Blonzely after looking at Miss Cecil, and collecting what had passed in her memory, which told her that the nabob came for the purpose of obtain-

obtaining an interview with my accuser, boldly answered "No."

"Who was it then?" inquired Lord Denmore, relapsing into frenzy.

Mrs. Blonzely alarmed by his vehemence, and at a loss whom to screen or whom to convict, hesitatingly replied, "Mr. Treville."

Miss Cecil's sensations were now changed from the exulting arrogance of successful malice, to the agony of wounded pride; with her eyes widely opened, and her arms falling as though they had become suddenly paralytic, she exclaimed, "Is it possible? Did Mr. Treville condescend to notice this insignificant creature?"

"I cannot, I will not believe it," said Lord Denmore. "I know that Treville is an honourable man; I would trust him with my fame or life: and I can scarcely suppose that he would
endeavour

endeavour to rob me of that which is dearer to me than either."

Lady Denmore now started from her seat: "My Lord," said she with a faltering voice, "your warmth in the cause of an imprudent girl becomes suspicious. You may protect her; but the world would laugh at my credulity if I were the dupe of your pretended friendship."

I pitied Lady Denmore's agitation, because I knew that it proceeded more from the discovery of Mr. Treville's designs, than from jealousy of her husband. Even at the moment when she insulted me by unmerited reproaches, I felt inclined to tranquillize her inquietude, and after a silence of a few moments, I replied, "If there is sincerity in the heart of women, I solemnly declare, that so far from meditating an interview with Mr. Treville, I did not even see him."

My

My guardian now turned towards Mrs. Blonzely, and exclaimed, "Infamous slanderer! By whom are you instigated to this diabolical machination? Answer me truly, and without hesitation, did Miss St. Leger, or did she not, *see* Mr. Treville at your house?"

"No; she did not, my Lord," replied Mrs. Blonzely.

"I believe you!" cried my guardian. "I knew it was a falsehood, an infamous falsehood!" I observed Lady Denmore's colour return to her pale cheek, and I had not resolution a second time to repel it.

"Rest assured, my Lord," said I, "that no personal insult was offered to me while under Mrs. Blonzely's roof."

"Heaven forbid!" cried the slanderer. "The reputation I maintain—"

Lord Denmore laughed. "Come, come, madam," said he, "spare your asseverations; for I know you. But tell me,

me, Gertrude," continued he, "how came this modest, conscientious personage to let you escape from her reputable mansion."

"This paper will explain the mystery," said I, drawing from my pocket the note which had fallen from Mrs. Blonzely's box, and without hesitation presenting it to Lord Denmore; who, on perceiving that it had no direction, opened it, and read the following contents:

"Dear Treville,

"Meet me in an hour at Mrs. Blonzely's; I have some explanations to require, which interest me nearly. I write this at the library, seeing you at Lady Denmore's window. If you do not come I shall accept Sir Hector's attentions. Decide speedily, for I will neither be trifled with, nor tortured by suspense.—Adieu.

"EMMA."

"It

"It is a forgery," said Miss Cecil.
"Is it not, Blondely?"

"Entirely," answered the cunning embassadress, whose eyes thanked Miss Cecil for that address, which is only reserved for accomplished effrontery.

"I am awakened from a dream of deception," said Lord Denmore, bowing to Miss Cecil, and presenting her elucidating epistle: "and I trust that, when next your malice shall select an object for its ingenious machinations, you will choose one who is not under my protection. Gertrude," continued my guardian, "you stand acquitted, honourably acquitted; for I believe the whole story to be an artful invention, meant to calumniate you, and to expose my friend. I therefore require no farther proofs of your worthiness, than the knowledge that you are the object of Miss Cecil's persecution."

"Contempt-

“Contemptible dupe!” muttered Miss Cecil; while Mrs. Blonzely stole out of the circle, leaving her mortified patroness to bear ‘her blushing honours thick about her.’

The Duchess, with stern and unaffected dignity, quitted the room; Lady Denmore rose, and followed. Miss Cecil, with a malevolent and demoniac grin, begged Lord Denmore’s pardon for having interrupted the repose of his family, by presuming to encounter his acknowledged favourite. “I also request,” said she, “that you will convey my regrets to Lady Denmore for the uneasiness I have occasioned her, by a discovery of Mr. Treville’s infidelity. The rash and ridiculous attempt she made upon her own life induced me to pity her, particularly when I reflected, that my journey from Denmore Castle with that coxcomb occasioned her despair.”

Lord

Lord Denmore, unable to bear the taunts of a being, who dared assume the privilege of that *sex* which she disgraced, by offering an insult which he could not punish, snatched up his hat, and rushed out of the drawing-room. At this moment the servant announced Lady Upas, who perceiving my eyes red with tears, and Miss Cecil's features distorted by rage, inquired the cause, and expressed her fears that something unpleasant had happened. "I met Lord Denmore at the door," said she, "looking like one that was distracted. What has been the matter?"

"Only a discovery, that your husband met Miss St. Leger at Mrs. Blonzely's!" said Miss Cecil.

"With all my heart!" cried Lady Upas, smiling: "and I am only sorry that they ever parted."

"Indeed,

"Indeed, Lady Upas," said I, "there is not one word of truth in Miss Cecil's story."

"O! pray do not endeavour to undeceive me," interrupted Lady Upas; "for it is a received opinion, that there is great consolation even in the worst cases, in knowing that others are as wretched as ourselves."

"Are you pleased to know that you only share your husband's affections?" said Miss Cecil.

"I am more than pleased, I am rejoiced, to find that there are bosoms willing to participate even in our greatest misfortunes!" replied Lady Upas.

"Well!" exclaimed Miss Cecil, "since you are so indifferent about the matter, you deserve every thing you have."

"And infinitely more, if you knew how dearly I pay for it!" rejoined Lady Upas.

"I think

“ I think Sir Hector should know how you despise him,” said Miss Cecil.

“ He should indeed,” answered Lady Upas ; “ but that he is dull of comprehension. Suppose you undertake the task of unravelling the mystery ? You are an adept at discovering secrets. To *you*, I am indebted for my delectable *tête-à-tête* with Sir Hector from Denmore Castle ; ’tis *you* whom Miss St. Leger may thank for Lord Denmore’s knowledge of Sir Hector’s letter to her on the same evening ; and, if I mistake not, Lady Denmore has also to thank *you*, for informing her that Mr. Treville had made proposals of marriage to you, having refused Miss St. Leger’s hand, on discovering an intrigue between her and her guardian.” Miss Cecil was almost suffocated with rage, when hearing Lord Denmore’s footsteps, she darted out of the room, passed him on the stairs, and hastened across the Steine.

We saw her scarlet habit scorching the turf with its red blaze, till she turned into the Library to vent her spleen on every object she encountered; while the good old Duchess and myself repaired to our toilets to dress for the evening.

What passed at the rooms you shall know in my next letter: till then, adieu.

END OF THE FIRST VOLUME.

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